

January 28, 2024

“Who Chose the 27 Books of the New Testament?”

9 AM / Room 810

The New Testament is the testimony of the Apostles



Clement, bishop of Rome (1st century)

“The Apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus the Christ was sent from God. The Christ therefore is from God and the Apostles from the Christ.”

He refers to the apostles as “the greatest and most righteous pillars of the Church” (*The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* [1 Clement]).

Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (2nd century)

“I am not [commanding] you as Peter and Paul did. They were apostles, I am condemned” (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans*).

Justin Martyr, apologist in Palestine (2nd century)

“For from Jerusalem there went out into the world, men, twelve in number...by the power of God they proclaimed to every race of men that they were sent by Christ to teach to all the word of God... For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them” (*First Apology*).

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon (2nd century)

“We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith” (*Against Heresies*, III.1).

Paul, apostle to the Gentiles (1st century)

“³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:3-10a).

Four Kinds of Letters

1. Recognized Books

22 of the 27

- 1-4. the four Gospels
- 5. Acts
- 6-19. the epistles of Paul (including Hebrews)
- 20-22. 1 John, 1 Peter, Revelation

2. Disputed Books

The other 5

- James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John

1 John 4:1-3: “¹ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.”

“These books were questioned not because they taught a different gospel but, especially in several instances, because they were not well known and widely circulated in the church” (Neil R. Lightfoot, *How We Got the Bible*, 2010).

3. Rejected Books

These are books that are regarded as (generally) orthodox, helpful and useful but still did not have the authority of Scripture.

- Shepherd of Hermas, the Didache, the Gospel of the Hebrews, and the Epistle of Barnabas.

4. Heretical Books

These are “forgeries” that Eusebius regards as “altogether wicked and impious” (3.25.7).

- Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Matthias, the Acts of Andrew, and the Acts of John

The churches all understood that these letters were not orthodox. This was NOT “the faith once delivered to the saints.”

Extrabiblical Testimony

- Muratorian Fragment
- Origen's list

“So too our Lord Jesus Christ... sent his apostles as priests carrying well-wrought trumpets. First Matthew sounded the priestly trumpet in his Gospel. Mark also, and Luke, and John. ... Peter moreover sounds with the two trumpets of his Epistles; James also and Jude... and John gives forth the trumpet sound through his Epistles and Revelation; and Luke while describing the deeds of the apostles. Latest of all... [Paul] thundering on the fourteen trumpets of his Epistles, threw down, even to the very foundations, the walls of Jericho.” – Origen

- Eusebius' list (27 books in first two categories)
- Athanasius of Alexandria's list of 367

“These are the springs of salvation... Let no one add anything to them or take anything away from them.” – Athanasius

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Approximate Time Span between original & copy	Number of Copies	Accuracy of Copies
Lucretius	died 55 or 53 B.C.		1100 yrs	2	----
Pliny	A.D. 61-113	A.D. 850	750 yrs	7	----
Plato	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs	7	----
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	A.D. 1100	800 yrs	8	----
Herodotus	480-425 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	----
Suetonius	A.D. 75-160	A.D. 950	800 yrs	8	----
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	----
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1300 yrs	9	----
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200	10	----
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000	10	----
Livy	59 BC-AD 17	----	???	20	----
Tacitus	circa A.D. 100	A.D. 1100	1000 yrs	20	----
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400	49	----
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1400 yrs	193	----
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (A.D. 50-100)	2nd Cent. A.D. (c. A.D. 130 f.)	less than 100 years	5600	99.5%

<https://carm.org/about-the-bible/manuscript-evidence-for-superior-new-testament-reliability/>
[Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry]

Practical Applications:

1. What is your view of the Bible? What is its role in your life?
2. Are you a wise learner of Christian literature, movies, sermons, voices?
3. Hear the common language of the Bible

1 Cor. 10:31: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”