

# *Smoky Mountain Bible Institute*

## *History 130 How we got the Bible II*

So let's do a brief discussion of how we got what we today call the bible. Discussing what we know as the 66 books of the bible and how they came together in the first three centuries of Christianity. Much of this was covered way back in lessons 3 and 4 but it is appropriate to review that here as we addressed that over 7 years ago.

First let's look at the Old Testament (OT). 39 books written between 1446 BC to around 433 BC. It constitutes the solid foundation upon which the New Testament stands, and points to Christ in its entirety. All Hebrew scholarship is in agreement as to what constitutes the **TANAK**, The Torah or (Law); Genesis, through Deuteronomy, Neviim or (Prophets); Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the 12 minor prophets, The Kethubim (writings); Psalms Proverbs, Job, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Ester, Daniel, Ezra & Nehemiah, Chronicles. This Old Testament Canon has been accepted as the divine Word of God by His people for almost 2500 years. And since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we have copies of OT text that range in age from 2100 to 2300 years old with the exception of the book of Esther the oldest copy being just over 1000 years old.

Trinitarian Christianity and all of biblical scholarship find full agreement on the 27 books that constitute the New Testament, written between 45 and 95 AD. The earliest list is the Muratorian Canon from 150 AD listing 24 books. Origen of Alexandria listed all 27 in 240 AD, and by 397 AD Eusebius, Athanasius, and the Council of Carthage had all listed the 27 books we call the New Testament.

Now you might ask: Why did it take them so long, some 150 to 300 years to identify these 27 books? Well, that would be a very good question and here are some very good answers.

- Over half of the NT is letters that were spread all over the Roman Empire, The Gospels were also spread throughout the early church. These obviously took time to be brought together and for their authorship to be verified.

- The "technology" of the day was not conducive to large collections of books: scrolls which can only hold one or two books. Scrolls were replaced by what is called a Codex or "books with pages" and these did not start being produced until the second and third centuries.

- The first century Christians probably did not see the need for a collection of books because they thought Christ's return would be very soon, but "soon" for us and "soon" for our eternal God are very different.

- Heretical writings existed, like the Gnostic gospels, and other "pseudepigraphal" books—spurious writings falsely attributed to biblical characters or times. These texts were written between 200 BC--200 AD and were easily identified by the early church as fraudulent because of their clear contradiction to the rest of the canon. But excluding these fraudulent works also took time.

Now many say that centuries of copying to replace old worn-out text would introduce many errors. Well, let's look at all the errors introduced into the book of Isaiah between the Dead Sea Scroll copy (from about 100 BC) and the earliest copy we had available (before the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered) known as Codex Leningradensis (1000 AD). The differences between these two texts over that 1100 year period, can be described as changes in the style that a particular letter is written, changes in the way words are spelled, changes in the way sentences are constructed, changes in prefixes or suffixes. It seems that over time as the language changed, but God's word grew to communicate the same truth. So, while grammar and spelling have changed, God's word has not.

Till next month In Christ Pastor Portier