

Smoky Mountain Bible Institute

History 131 How we got the Bible III

Let's continue our discussion of how we got the bible this month. Some early historical witnesses and early church witnesses. Irenaeus of Lyons is a man studied under Polycarp who was martyred in 155 AD, and it is traditionally held that Polycarp was a student of the Apostle John. So, Irenaeus was only one generation from the original writers of Scripture. This makes him a very reliable witness. Irenaeus is one of the earliest and greatest defenders of Scripture's divine inspiration. In his writings from around 180 AD, he quoted over 1000 scripture passages from all but 5 books of the New Testament. Irenaeus called them "the Scriptures" given by the Holy Spirit. Similar claims of divine inspiration can be cited in the 3rd century by the early church fathers, Clement and Origin of Alexandria. They too cite Scripture as a fixed number of writings with divine authorship. Origin is the first to mention all 27 books of the NT in 240 AD. Let's look at one more church father—Athanasius of Alexandria. He too cites 27 NT books in 367 AD, and he wrote the following words: ***"These are the fountains of salvation, that whoever thirsts, may be satisfied by the eloquence which is in them. In them alone is set forth the doctrine of piety. Let no one add to them nor take anything from them."*** You may think these witnesses are biased and they probably were, but their bias does not invalidate their witness. Their credibility is not historically in question, so their witness is of great value.

We also have the Jewish historian Josephus who is accepted world-wide as one of history's earliest historians. He refers to sacred scriptures divided into three parts: the five books of the Torah; thirteen books of the Nevi'im, and four other books of hymns and wisdom. Since there are 24 books in the current Jewish canon instead of the 22 mentioned by Josephus, some scholars have suggested that he considered Ruth part of Judges, and Lamentations part of Jeremiah. "The Jewish Canon has only 24 books because of the combination of books like Kings & Chronicles their 24 contain the same information as our 39. So let's see what he had to say about our Old Testament. In about 90 AD, Josephus wrote the following words: ***"for we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another [as the Greeks have] but only twenty-two books, which contain all the records of all the past times, and which are justly believed to be divine."***

Till next month Pastor Portier