



## Putting the Puzzle Pieces Together

Sixth Series: "The Top Edge" New Testament: Gospels  
Lesson 18: Matthew

### I. Introduction regarding Canonicity

#### A. General comments

1. Difference between inspiration and canonicity: "Inspiration indicated how the bible received its authority, whereas canonization tells how the Bible received its acceptance. It is one thing for God to give the Scriptures their authority, and quite another for men to recognize that authority" (Geisler and Nix, p. 203)
2. God determines the Canon Canonicity is determined by God. A book is not inspired because men made it canonical; it is canonical because God inspired it. Thus, canonicity is determined by inspiration.
3. Distinction between determination and discovery: Understanding canonicity involves two related but separate issues: 1) Canonicity is determined by God and 2) Canonicity is discovered by man. A failure to keep this distinction leads to confusion. How a book received its authority is determined by God. How men discover and recognized that authority is another matter altogether.
4. "The church no more gave us the New Testament Canon than Sir Isaac Newton gave us the force of gravity." (God Speaks to Man, p. 81)

#### B. Old Testament Canon

1. The Old Testament Books were collected by Jews and seen as both sacred and divinely authoritative.
2. Later Old Testament books quoted earlier Old Testament books as authoritative.
3. Fulfilled prophecy links the Old Testament books together.
4. Old Testament canon era lasted from 1445 BC to 430 BC
5. Jewish Historian Josephus (AD 37-95) indicated that Old Testament was complete after the reign of Artaxerxes (464-424 BC).
6. The New Testament quotes no Old Testament book as authoritative after time of Malachi.

#### C. Apocrypha

Not all books written during Old Testament era are scriptures. They can be classified into four groups

1. **The Homologoumena** (Books accepted by all)
  - a. *Nature*: “The Homologoumena are books which once they were accepted into the canon were not subsequently questioned or disputed. They were recognized not only by early generations but by succeeding generations as well.” (Geisler and Nix, p.257)
  - b. *Number*: The Homologoumena comprise thirty-four of the thirty-nine books in the Protestant Old Testament. The only books that are not part of the Homologoumena in the Protestant Old Testament are Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Ezekiel and Proverbs.
2. **The Antilegomena** (Books disputed by some)
  - a. *Nature*: The Antilegomena are the several books that were initially and ultimately considered canonical but were, at one time, disputed by some of the Jewish community.
  - b. *Number*: Five canonical books of the Old Testament fall into this category: Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Ezekiel and Proverbs.
3. **The Pseudepigrapha** (Books rejected by all)
  - a. The term pseudepigrapha means writings attributed to fictitious authors. The Pseudepigrapha are books that are clearly spurious and inauthentic. Many of these works claim to have been written by biblical authors, but in reality were written between 200 BC and AD 200. Most of these books are made up of dreams, visions and revelations in the apocalyptic style of Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah.
  - b. The number of pseudepigrapha is unknown. There may be more than 200 such titles.
  - c. Examples: 1, 2 Enoch, Assumption of Moses
  - d. Reasons for rejecting the Apocrypha as canon
    - 1) None of the Apocrypha books were included or accepted into the Hebrew canon.
    - 2) Jesus and New Testament writers never quote it as scripture.
    - 3) Most Apocrypha books were written after 430 BC and were not accepted by many Jewish and Christian scholars in the first few centuries.
    - 4) No council in the first 4 centuries favored them. It was not until Council of Trent (1545-63) that a council favored them.
    - 5) They contain many historical and geographical inaccuracies.
    - 6) Some Apocrypha books teach unbiblical doctrines
      - a) Example: praying for the dead: 2 Maccabees 12:45-46 versus Hebrew 9:27 and Luke 16:25-26
      - b) Salvation by works: Tobit 12:9 versus Romans 4-5 and Galatians 3:11

- 7) There is no claim in any Apocrypha book that it is the word of God
- e. These books do have value – giving important historical and cultural information.

#### D. New Testament Canon

##### 1. Phases of New Testament collection:

- a. 50-95 AD: Writing of New Testament Books – copied and disseminated throughout church.
- b. 96-150 AD: Recognition and collection into groups of New Testament Books. Men like Clemente, Polycarp and Ignatius used the majority of New Testament books in their writings.
- c. 150-190 AD: Compiling the canon – most books of New Testament clearly recognized as canon. Philemon, Hebrews, James and 1, 2 Peter were omitted from some lists.
- d. The Period of the Councils:  
The major councils were:
  - 1) *The Council of Laodicea* (AD 363) – this particular council accepted all of the books of the New Testament except the Book of Revelation.
  - 2) *The Council of Carthage* (AD 397) – this council of chaired by the preeminent early church father and theologian, Augustine. The Council of Carthage accepted all 27 New Testament books.
  - 3) *The Council of Hippo* (419 AD) – this council reaffirmed the Council of Carthage.

##### 2. Criteria used to discover the New Testament canon

- a. Inspiration
- b. Apostolic authority in that era
- c. Orthodoxy
- d. Universal church recognition

## II. The Gospels

- A. Independent witnesses to the events and teachings of Jesus
- B. Written at different times, in different places for distinct constituencies.
- C. Matthew, Mark, Luke are synoptic gospels.  
“Syn:” together                      “optanomai:” to see
- D. John’s gospel is unique with much of the material unique to that gospel
- E. Consider the use of a harmony (see handout).

### III. Matthew

- A. Theme: Jesus is the Messiah “Jesus possesses the credentials of Messiah, ministers in the predicted pattern of Messiah, preaches messages only Messiah could preach and finally dies the death only Messiah could die.” (Talk thru the Book, p. 307)
1. The phrase “King of Heavens” appears 32 times in Matthew and no where else in the New Testament.
  2. 60% of the 1,071 verses contain the spoken word of Jesus.
- B. This is the gospel with a distinctive Jewish perspective:
1. There are 129 (quotes or allusions) from 25 Old Testament books.
  2. There are many references to the Law, sacrifices, offerings, fasting, etc.
  3. “The gospel written by a Jew to Jews about a Jew.”
- C. Writer: Matthew (“gift of the Lord”) surnamed Levi (Mark 2:14, Luke 5:27) was a tax collector.
- D. Dating: some time between 40 AD to 140 AD.
- E. A working outline:
1. 1:1-4:11 The presentation of the King
  2. 4:12-7:29 The proclamation of the King
  3. 8:1-11:1 The power of the King
  4. 11:2-16:12 The progressive rejection of the King
  5. 16:13-20:28 The preparation of the King’s disciples
  6. 20:29-27:66 The presentation and rejection of the King
  7. 28 The proof of the King
- F. Some Key bible stories in Matthew:

1. The birth of Jesus	1:18-25
2. His temptation	4:1-11
3. Sermon on the Mount	5-7
4. Various parables	13:3-51
5. Feeding the 5000	14:15-21
6. Walking on water	14:22-33
7. The transfiguration	17:1-9
8. The triumphal entry	21:1-11
9. Jesus’ trials and crucifixion	26 & 27
10. His resurrection	28

#### **IV. So what?**

Consider Matt. 28:18-20

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do you think God recorded four separate gospels?
2. Do you have confidence in the scriptures? What are the implications of 2 Tim. 3:15-16 and 2 Peter 1:20-21 for you personally?