

Scripture's History and Formation

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[0:00] Well, we're considering the subject of the canon of Scripture, this book that we bring with us each Lord's Day. I trust the book that you read each day. Why is it the book that it is?

Why does it contain the books that it has in it? How does it come down to us? Why is there a written word of God at all? Why did He reveal Himself in this way?

That's some of the questions that we're considering in this very brief study. And canon is simply the list of books that belongs in the Bible. The word canon means rule or norm or standard.

And we apply it to books that are normative, that are the rule for the Christian life. And so, there are a certain number of books that belong in that canon, that list.

And remember the foundational things we saw last week? God has spoken. He wants that word to be recorded. He wanted it to be written down, and it has been.

[0:57] It's why we have our Bibles. God's Word is self-authenticating. His Word is true. It is inerrant. And remember, as we discuss all of these things, that God's providence, His sovereignty, is the thing that's overarching all of it.

The Bible we have in our hands today, we have ultimately because it's the one that God wants us to have. He has guided each step of this process along the way so that we have His Word.

And so, though there are various human factors involved at certain points along the way, we can trust that God is sovereign over all of it. So, for today, how did that Word of God come to take the form that it has?

Where did the canon come from? We're going to talk about the Old Testament first, and very briefly, because this was never in much dispute. As you read through the New Testament, you see that it quotes the Old Testament, and it does it with authority.

It assumes that the Old Testament has authority for God's people. And it's the same Old Testament that the Jews claimed. There wasn't conflict between the Jews and the Christians over which books should be included in that original Old Testament canon.

[2:04] They agreed on those things, even though they disagreed very much about the person of Christ. And so, since it wasn't up for much debate at all, we're not going to spend a lot of time on it.

I'm just going to see a little bit about how the New Testament uses the Old Testament to show that it was considered as a book with authority. We're going to quote from several people today, most frequently B.B. Warfield, a Reformed theologian, and then Herman Ritterbos, and he's a Dutch Reformed theologian.

But B.B. Warfield says about this Old Testament canon, he says, on every page of that book, the New Testament is spread evidence that from the very beginning, the Old Testament was as cordially recognized as law by the Christian as by the Jew.

The Christian church thus was never without a Bible or a canon. Even before the apostles started writing down what we have as the New Testament, the New Testament church had a Bible. It was the Old Testament.

And that was not in dispute. We see it in Jesus' words. He treated the Old Testament as Scripture, as authority. Luke 24, 27 and 44, beginning with Moses.

[3:19] Moses. That's the first five books of the Bible. Beginning with Moses. And all the prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself. Jesus assumed that the Old Testament was Scripture, and it talked about Him.

He said to them, This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms. There He added the Psalms to it. Even the Psalms are Scriptures and speak about Jesus.

That's the way He treated it. John 5, 46 and 47. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for He wrote about me. Jesus quotes it as authoritative.

And then the rest of the New Testament does as well. It's not just Jesus. John 1, 45. Philip found Nathanael and told him, We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law, and about whom the prophets also wrote, Jesus of Nazareth.

They treated it as Scripture, and they believed what it said. Also, as you read through the New Testament, you often find the words, It is written. It is written.

[4 : 24] It is written. When they say that, then they quote something from the Old Testament. And it's not quoted as, Here's something to give a little bit more weight to my argument. It's quoted because it is written.

And because it's written, it's so. This settles it. It quiets the argument. God said it. It's written down. And so, that should settle it for you. Jesus quoted it that way.

When He was tempted by the devil. Matthew 4, 4. Jesus answered, It is written. That settles it. The Old Testament says it. It is written. Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

And He's quoting Deuteronomy 8, 3. You can look up Deuteronomy 8, 3 and see that Jesus is quoting that. But not just Jesus did that. The apostles did it. Acts 13.

Verses 32 and 34. Paul says, We tell you the good news. What God promised our fathers, He has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm.

[5 : 23] Wow. He gets specific. He doesn't just say it's written. He tells you where. He quotes Psalm 2. In the second Psalm, You are my son. Today I have become your father. And then he keeps going.

The fact that God raised Him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words. I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David. Now he's quoting Isaiah 55 and verse 3.

And he goes on and he quotes another passage. And he quotes it as authoritative for the early church. And so we see Jesus and the apostles quoting from the law, the prophets and the Psalms. We don't have time to look. There's also quotes from the historical books. There's quotes from the wisdom literature in the New Testament. In fact, there's between 300 and 350 quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament.

Quoted as God's word. And besides the direct quotations, there's thousands more of allusions to the Old Testament. Where you see hints of it, glimmers of it. Similar wording, though it's not a direct quote.

[6 : 22] That happens again and again as you read through the New Testament. And if you're ever wondering about that, use your cross-reference. If you've got one down the middle of your Bible, this will tell you whether something similar elsewhere in Scripture and direct quotes, at least in my Bible, are put down in the footnotes.

And you can see it for yourself as you read that the New Testament church believed the Old Testament was God's word. Okay, so if they had a Bible, they had the Old Testament, why more? Why add to it? If that was authoritative, why should something else be written down? Well, we looked last week at Hebrews 1. Why don't you turn there with me for a moment. Hebrews 1.

All of those Old Testament prophets and Psalms, Moses, they were talking about Jesus. But then when Jesus comes, things change.

Jesus talks about Himself. He reveals Himself to the people, and He appoints His apostles to do the same. Hebrews 1 and verse 1. In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things and through whom He made the universe.

[7 : 41] God has spoken by His Son. If God has spoken by His Son, we want more than just the Old Testament talking about Jesus, we want to know what Jesus Himself said.

And so Jesus taught. He said things, and His teaching was considered authoritative. But did Jesus ever write down His own teaching? Did He ever put it to writing?

Himself? No. Not that we know of, and not that we have recorded. Who did that? Who wrote down what Jesus said?

Who recorded His teaching? Who were the guardians and the keepers of the teaching of Jesus? The apostles. The ones that He appointed. He said, you are to be My witnesses, My representatives.

These truths needed to be written down so that future generations could know them as well. And Jesus appointed the apostles, among other things, for that purpose. The fact that He appointed apostles and made it clear that their words were to be written down as the grounds for adding to the Old Testament canon what we now know as the New Testament.

[8:51] It's in the nature of Jesus as the revelation of God to reveal truth. And the apostles recorded that. And as they recorded it, it became known as the apostolic tradition.

Don't be scared of that word tradition. Okay? The Bible uses it. And I want us to see that. Turn over to 2 Thessalonians 2 with me. 2 Thessalonians 2.

As the apostles taught the truth about Jesus, there came to be known this apostolic tradition. Whether it was given verbally by the apostles when they were present with various churches, various people, or whether it was written down, didn't matter.

It was considered authoritative and it was the apostolic tradition. 2 Thessalonians 2.15 So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you whether by word of mouth or by letter.

That word teachings, you might see it in one of your footnotes, is actually the word traditions. People get real Protestants. We get afraid of the word tradition.

[9:54] But we shouldn't be. There was an apostolic tradition and Paul tells the Thessalonians to hold on to it. Hold to the traditions we passed on to you. Whether by word, whether we're teaching you, or whether by letter, something that we wrote down for you.

And so there's this apostolic tradition and their writings were equivalent to their verbal teaching.

Those are the two things we get from this verse. Didn't matter if they spoke it or wrote it.

And they had this tradition. 1 Corinthians 11.12 Same thing. I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, that's the same word, traditions, just as I pass them on to you.

You see, the apostles were foundational and their teaching or tradition was encapsulated in sacred writings that were as foundational as the apostles themselves. And so, before they died, the apostles made it clear.

Our writings are as authoritative as what we say with our lips. So that when we're dead and gone, the church still has authoritative teaching. It's what we wrote down. It's what you have in your hands, the letters that we wrote to you.

[11:03] And we could spend lots of time talking about how they were foundational. We don't have time to do it. Just listen to Ephesians 2.19 and 20. Consequently, you're no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people, members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone.

The tradition, the things they taught were foundational for the church. And that means when they stopped teaching, when they stopped writing, the canon was closed. That's why we aren't still adding books today.

They laid the foundation and that work is done. Now, the apostles didn't do this on their own. It wasn't their idea. They didn't get together and say, hey, let's say that whatever we write down and whatever we say is authoritative for the church.

They did it because Jesus told them to do it. They did it on His authority and with the help of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says to them in John 15, when the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who goes out from the Father, He will testify about Me and you also must testify.

For you have been with Me from the beginning. So Jesus gathers these eyewitnesses around Him and He says, you must testify. You have to tell what you've seen even as the Spirit testifies to you.

[12:26] So ultimately, we have the canon of Scripture because of Christ. He revealed Himself. He appointed apostles to write that revelation down to be authoritative for us.

He gave us those apostles who were the rock on which the church is to be built, Matthew 16, 18.

And they claimed that authority when they wrote. Turn over to 1 Thessalonians 4. In verse 2.

They understood that that was their role. That was their place. 1 Thessalonians 4.2, Paul says, For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

Not on my own authority. Not because I woke up one morning and decided I'm going to write something authoritative for the church, but because Jesus told me to on His authority. And so, Herman Ritterbos says, you've got the quote there so you can follow it, By giving authority to His

apostles, Christ Himself has given a foundation and canon to His church.

This canon has an entirely unique, absolutely authoritative, and closed character and can be preserved only in written form by accepting a fixed, closed collection of writings as exclusively canonical.

[13:41] The church has acted entirely in keeping with the structure and intention of the divine plan of redemption revealed in Christ. That was the way it was supposed to be. And as we'll see as we go along here, that's how it was.

It never was any other way. The church received these writings and they considered them to be the Word of God. It wasn't in dispute. It wasn't argued for the majority of the books of the New Testament.

I know I'm heaping information up on you, so let's take a breath. Do you have any questions? Any observations? Anything that needs to be clarified?

Jim? When Luke moved to Adopolis, was he writing, did he basically tell him the same thing, the reason he was doing the writing? Yes, and we're going to get to Luke in a few minutes.

We're going to get down there and we'll talk about him then. But yes, he was. Good. He's saying, I'm handing on to you what I received, what I've investigated, and it's that apostolic tradition, even though he wasn't an apostle.

[14:43] Jim? He said the majority of the ones that were just in the past are not. Do you? How many were? We're going to get there too.

We're going to get there. It's a good question and it's a little further down on your handout. We're going to burn that bridge when we get to it. Or across it, I mean. Okay?

All right. If you don't give them time to ask questions, they can't. All right, so we're down here to the letter B on your handout there, the writing of the apostles.

And their writing made it clear they understood their role, that they were speaking for the Lord and that their words were the Word of God just as much as the Old Testament was the Word of God.

Remembering, I think the first thing that you have there we've already said, their writing was as authoritative as their spoken word.

We've already seen that in 2 Thessalonians 2.15. But then, as we read them, we begin to see that their commands are to be obeyed as though they were the commands of the Lord. 2 Thessalonians 3.14.

[15:57] You're there in the Thessalonian books. You can turn over to chapter 3.14. If the apostles wrote it, it was to be received as the Lord's command. If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him.

Do not associate with him in order that he may feel ashamed. Paul's not on a power trip here. What I say goes, he's writing as an apostle of Jesus Christ. And so he's to be obeyed in that way.

1 Corinthians 14.37. If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. Okay?

Not mine. It's God's. And so obey it. And then there were commands to read the apostles' writing publicly. Coming in the tradition of the Jewish synagogues. And we see that in the Gospels, don't we?

Jesus goes into the synagogue and He's handed a scroll and He reads from the prophet Isaiah. They were in the habit of publicly reading the Scriptures. And the apostles say, don't just do that with the Old Testament.

[16:59] Do that with the letters that we write to you. They wanted the churches to treat their writing as Scripture. 1 Thessalonians 5.27. You can turn to that one. You're in the neighborhood there.

1 Thessalonians 5.27. I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. Colossians 4.16.

After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans. And that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. Those letters weren't authoritative just for the churches to whom they were written.

They were to be read in other churches because they were Scripture. They were the Word of God through the apostles. Something similar in Revelation 1.3. You're to read it and take it to heart what the apostle has written.

Other things the apostles said showed that they understood their writing to be Scriptures. We're all familiar with 2 Timothy 3.16. All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable. Right before that, in verse 15, he's talking to Timothy and says, from infancy, Timothy, you have known the holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

[18:12] The only Scriptures Timothy could have known in infancy were the Old Testament. And he uses one word for Scripture there. But then when he gets to verse 16, he uses a different word.

And he said, all Scripture, not just the Old Testament Scriptures that you knew as an infant, Timothy, but all Scripture is inspired by God. You see, there's something more than just the Old Testament.

Turn over to 2 Peter 3. 2 Peter 3.2. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Two things we see there. The words spoken in the past by the holy prophets is put on a level, same level, same plane, with the commands given by Jesus. Okay?

We can handle that. But it's the commands given by Jesus through the apostles. And so the New Testament Scriptures, the commands given by Jesus through the apostles, that tradition we talked about, they're on the same level with the Old Testament holy prophets according to Peter.

[19:24] And those apostles, again, they're claiming to speak for Jesus. The command given through the apostles. 2 Peter 3.15-16. A little bit further down. This is Peter talking about Paul.

And he says, Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with wisdom that God gave him. Wow. Paul's writing with God's wisdom.

Okay, that's one thing, but he keeps going. He says, He writes the same way in all his letters speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand.

Boy, he's right. I think that sometimes when I read the letters of Paul. That's a little bit hard to understand or a lot hard sometimes. Which, ignorant and unstable people distort as they do the other Scriptures to their own destruction.

Now, if he had left that word other out, if he had just said people distort Paul like they do the Scriptures, that wouldn't mean anything about Paul's writing. This means people twist it. But because he says they distort Paul's writings like they do the other Scriptures, he's including Paul's writing in the Scriptures.

[20:30] What Paul is writing is the Word of God. So says Peter. These apostles understood that they were transmitting the truth of God's Word and it was to be received that way.

One more. 1 Timothy 5 and verse 18. 1 Timothy 5 and verse 18.

Paul is quoting Scripture and he combines the Old Testament with one of the Gospels and calls it all Scripture. It says, For the Scripture says, Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain. That's Deuteronomy 25 and verse 4. And the worker deserves his wages. That's Luke 10 and verse 7. Do you see what Paul does? He quotes Scripture and he quotes the Old Testament and he quotes the New Testament and he puts together and it's all Scripture.

That's how Paul treated it. That's how he expects Timothy to treat it and the church at Ephesus where Timothy is working to treat it. The writings of Luke, who by the way was not an apostle.

[21:37] That's interesting. The writings of Luke are considered Scripture by the Apostle Paul. Luke wasn't an apostle but he was a faithful transmitter or recorder or writer of that apostolic tradition that we talked about.

We're going to say, again, a little bit more about that in a minute. So, it's not just apostolic authorship that gets you into the canon. It's being a faithful recorder of the apostolic tradition and having the apostles approve it like Paul does here for Luke.

Alright, so he wrote it as Scripture and it was to be received as such. Now, let's talk about how it was then accepted early in the church. The early church fathers, those who weren't apostles but leaders in the early church make notations in their writings quoting the New Testament authors as Scripture.

And that's hugely significant. It's not just that the apostles claimed this authority, it was recognized by the churches. And so, when they write, and we don't have their writings in the Bible because they weren't apostolic, but these early church leaders, they wrote too.

And we can read their writings and they quote not just the Old Testament but they quote the New Testament and they quote it as Scripture. The authority that the apostles claimed was received by those churches.

[23:05] I don't have time to demonstrate that. I can show you quotes from the early church fathers if you'd like to see it on your own time. But let me summarize.

And I'll read for you B.B. Warfield's summary, citing various church fathers as he goes in early Christian writings. He says, it appears that from the beginning of the second century, and that is from the end of the apostolic age, the apostle John wrote the book of Revelation around A.D. 98. And so, he says, from about that time on, the end of the first century, the start of the second, the end of the apostolic age, a collection, and then he starts quoting early Christian authors. A collection of new books called the Gospels and Apostles was already part of the oracles of God or the Scriptures or the holy books or the Bible.

The New Testament was not a different book from the Old Testament, but part of the one body of Scripture with it. Immediately, in the early church, they're quoting what the apostles wrote and it's quoted as Scripture.

It's considered to be the Word of God. And from what we see, it's apparent that these writings didn't have to undergo a long period of time before they were accepted.

[24:18] They were immediately accepted as authoritative. Turn to 1 Thessalonians 2.13. It didn't take a long time. They immediately accepted the Word of the apostles as God's Word.

1 Thessalonians 2.13. And we also thank God continually because when you receive the Word of God, you heard from us, excuse me, when you receive the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accept it not as the Word of men, but as it actually is the Word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

See what he's saying? You received the Word of God from us, the apostles. Again, he's claiming that authority. And they received it, not as the Word of Paul, the Word of men, but as the Word of God.

And so from early on, it didn't take a church council or a group of leaders to say these particular writings are canonical and these are not. The apostolic tradition was simply accepted as the Word of God.

That was the nature of it because they were Christ's representatives. The quote from Ritterboss there. There was never any discussion of the canonicity of the majority of the New Testament writings.

[25:30] The church never regarded those writings as being anything but the authoritative witness to the time of redemption. The other church didn't sit down and say, how many gospels should we include in the canon and how many letters and whose letters and on what basis, what criteria should we decide that?

And the quote goes on here. The way the canon attained its position of authority in the church is historical evidence that these writings were never understood by the church except as its foundation.

The church, in other words, didn't have to create the canon. Jesus did that by appointing apostles and having them write down the revelation of God. His teaching and His apostles the authority to pass on that teaching.

So the church had it from the beginning. The Word of God. Well, then, moving on to number three, the formation and completion and criteria for the New Testament.

Given the nature of printing and reproduction in those days, it was impossible for every church or every group of churches to have a copy of every writing that the apostles had written.

[26:47] It simply wasn't possible. They didn't have copy machines like we do today. They didn't have the postal service like we do today. Copying and transmission, we'll talk more about this next week, was a painful, tedious process.

It took a long time to make one copy of one of Paul's letters. And that's just one copy, and if you want another one, you've got to handwrite the whole thing again. And again, hard to distribute. So given the nature of the lack of that technology in that day, impossible for every church or group of churches to have every book of the Bible.

And so one church might have known of all four Gospels and some of Paul's letters, but maybe not Peter's letters, and maybe not all of Paul's letters. Again, B.B. Warfield says, the Bible was circulated only in hand copies, slowly and painfully made.

And an incomplete copy obtained, say, at Ephesus in A.D. 68 would be likely to remain for many years the Bible of the church to which it was conveyed, and might indeed become the parents of

other copies, incomplete like itself, and thus the means of providing a whole district with incomplete Bibles.

You see how that would happen? Here's some churches over here in the east. They've received Paul's letters and they're able to share them among themselves, but way over here in the west, they didn't get the ones that these guys wrote over here.

[28:10] And as the copies were made over here, they're circulated over here, but maybe never made it over here. No, they receive it as God's Word, and these guys, what they got from the apostles, they receive as God's Word, but some of their collection was incomplete and so was some of theirs over here.

And so churches in different areas had questions about particular books of the Bible that they didn't originally have. In particular, the books that were in doubt, the book of Hebrews, the book of Jude, the book of Revelation, the letter that James wrote, and a few others, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, some of those were in question and conclusion was reached about them at various times.

Some of them because of authorship. Initially, they weren't written by the apostles. It contained that apostolic tradition, but not written by the apostles, like the book of Hebrews.

The Eastern church accepted Hebrews, but the Western church didn't. And they had some questions because they were pretty sure that Paul didn't write it. Now, that's a debate that still goes on today. Did Paul write it or didn't?

I don't think that he did. But it contained that apostolic tradition, and so they were hesitant. The Western church was hesitant. The Western church accepted the book of Revelation, but the Eastern church didn't.

[29:31] There were a few people in the Eastern church that misused the book of Revelation. They took it and they went all sorts of places with it. And people thought, well, if they can do that with Revelation, then it shouldn't be part of the Bible.

So the Eastern church, they were a little bit hesitant to accept Revelation. But typically, doubt over particular books was reserved for one geographic region of the church.

And when that region of the church became familiar with another region of the church that had that book in their canon, in their Bible, and they saw the other region's acceptance of it, they were able to overcome their own objections.

Ritterbos again says, the ultimate factor that again and again comes to the fore is the attestation that the books, including many disputed ones, have been accepted by the church for a long time past.

We didn't have it over here, but now we see that the Western church over here does have it, and so we should receive it just like they have. It's come to them with apostolic authority, and we should receive it as such.

[30:36] Sometimes, books that have been broadly accepted for a long time would come under attack from heretics and others, and then they would have to be defended on the basis of certain criteria. But those criteria were never the reason they were included in the first place.

So when was the New Testament canon completed? It was finished when the last authoritative piece of apostolic writing was finished, which was Revelation, A.D. 98. The Apostle John wrote the last book of the Bible.

When did the completed canon, the complete Bible, obtain universal circulation and acceptance? That was later, but by the time of Irenaeus, an early church father, that's late second century, 180, 190 A.D., there was a fairly broad accepted consensus.

Not universal at that point, that would come later, but by the end of the second century, it was pretty broad and accepted. So what about these disputed books?

The church over in the East accepts, the church in the West doesn't. And sometimes, when they see what the church in the West has done with it, then they accept it too. But other times, there were other books, and they would have to have some sort of criteria, the basis on which they would receive or reject these books.

[31:56] The first thing, acceptance with other areas of the church. The second thing beyond that was their content. Were they apostolic in their writing and in their authority?

Warfield says, in every case, the principle on which a book was accepted or doubts against it laid aside was the historical tradition of apostolicity. Did the writing contain that apostolic tradition?

Was it orthodox? Did it have anything that was contrary to everything else they had received? If you've got your, even if it's an incomplete Bible over here, and along comes this book and it claims to be Scripture, and you look at it and it's clear that it's in conflict with what's taught over here, then they would likely reject that.

But if it is clearly apostolic, written by the apostles, has that tradition, then it would be received. Some books didn't make the cut. Books that other early church fathers wrote. There's the letter of Barnabas, and there's the didache, which is the teaching, and the shepherd of Hermes, and there's these other things, and they're orthodox, they're good, but they never even claimed to be apostolic. They didn't claim to have that authority, and so they weren't included. There was literature that was almost like entertainment literature, and it ran with rampant speculation about the boyhood of Jesus, and how Jesus as a boy would do miracles and curse other kids when they did something bad.

[33 : 23] It's just pure speculation. And those things were, they were rejected. It was clear that they weren't part of God's word. And then there was heresy that was left out.

Things like the Gnostic Gospels. They could look at that and they said, well, that's clearly not apostolic. It didn't come from them. And so certain things would be excluded. So the main piece of criteria after acceptance from other regions of the church was, was it apostolic?

One other thing that we need to say to this morning is that that doesn't necessarily mean apostolic authorship. Luke was not an apostle. Mark was not an apostle.

Jude wasn't an apostle. And so what about them? Well, they weren't apostles, but they clearly contained the apostolic tradition, what we talked about earlier, what was handed down to the churches and was to be held on to them.

For example, Luke. Luke 1. Many have undertaken to drop an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us. That's that language of tradition that's being handed down and embraced.

[34 : 33] Just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

That idea that it wasn't written by an apostle hindered the acceptance of certain books, Hebrews. James, the brother of Jesus, not an apostle. And Jude.

And so Warfield says, and this quote is the last one on your handout, and it's very important and it's very helpful the way he puts it. The principle of canonicity was not apostolic authorship, but imposition by the apostles as law.

So that the apostles, that the apostles so imposed the Old Testament on the churches in which they founded can be denied by none. We saw that. They quoted the Old Testament and it was authoritative, and so the New Testament church received it as such.

And, in imposing new books on the same churches by the same apostolic authority, they did not confine themselves to books of their own composition. We've already noticed Luke, or Paul, quoting Luke as Scripture.

[35 : 51] And he's quoting something that wasn't written by an apostle. But it contains that apostolic tradition that was handed down. And so if the apostles imposed it on the churches as apostolic, then it was received by them.

Understand that this is not the church creating the canon. It's acknowledging that there's a canon of Scripture and we need some criteria by which to determine these few books that are in doubt.

The church doesn't create it. It needed a mechanism by which to recognize it. The few books that weren't already universally accepted as the authoritative, foundational Word of Christ contained in the apostolic tradition.

So can we be confident that we have the Word of God? Yes. There is remarkable consensus in the early church. And these people were not far removed like we are.

These were people who knew the apostles, who had sat under their teaching, and they quote them as authoritative. But ultimately, as we said at the beginning, we rest in the kind providence of God that we have received, passed down to us exactly the Word that God wants us to have.

[37 : 05] And there we have the greatest confidence that the Bibles we hold are the Word of God. It's how it was intended from the beginning. The whole structure of having apostles in the first place shows us that we should have some written form of God's Word, and we do.

The early church received it as such. We should as well. We have time. What questions do you have? Jim?

Depends on how you count. Some count 12, some count 15. Okay.

Good question. They're called the Apocrypha. And our confession makes mention of them. It says they're not Scripture. Scripture. The Apocrypha, by and large, and I've read one article on it, and I need to go back and review it probably.

But, by and large, they were intertestamental writings. Things that were written in between the two testaments. In between the Old Testament and New Testament. Before the time of Jesus.

[38:18] And so they didn't carry the weight of Jesus and the apostles. And they weren't the Word of God. They weren't prophets that wrote them. They were human writings.

There's interesting history in them. Some things that are factual. But, just like you can pick up a book about history and read it, but it's not part of our Bible. It contains facts in it, but it's not Scripture.

Who else has a question? Jim? So the same thing could be said about the Mormons? They have two? They have two. That came much later than these books that were excluded.

That's a later piece of history. Joseph Smith comes along and he claims that he received revelation from God. And he wrote it down and he says, this is revelation from God. Now that goes against our believing that the canon is closed.

The apostles were foundational. And so anything that somebody tries to add after that is clearly going to be out of line. And then the content of what he claimed to receive from God is way, way out of bounds.

[39:21] It doesn't even line up with the Scriptures. But that's a much later piece of history. Yeah. Good. Any other questions? Roger, comments? I've taken it to mean the book of Revelation, but the principle carries over to the rest of Scripture.

And even back in the book of Proverbs, you have it saying the word of God can't be broken. And I can't remember the reference. I believe there's something in the book of Proverbs that says something similar to what John says about not adding to and taking away.

I think John's talking about the prophecy that he received on the Isle of Patmos. But certainly the principle does apply to the rest that we don't add to or take away from the Scriptures. Alright, next week we'll get into some, we'll talk about some manuscripts and how the Scriptures were copied and passed on and how we, why we have different versions.

Why some people here today have the NIV and the New American Standard and the ESV and the New King James, the Old King James. We'll talk about how some of those things came to be.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to come see me and I'll either tell you that I don't know or can point you to a resource or maybe have the answer. But may we go with confidence that we have the Word of God and thankful that He, thankful that He did give it to us in writing.

[40:38] That it's not just recorded in sort of a vague oral tradition or something, but we've got, you know, we say a lot of times we don't have apostles anymore in the church. And by that we mean apostles that are living and breathing and walking around, but we've got the apostles.

They're right here in the pages of Scripture and how good that God has provided the foundation for His church and made that plain to us. So, let's rejoice today that we have the Word of God in our hands. We're dismissed.