

ANSWER KEY

how we got the

B I B L E



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How We Got the Bible

I. Introduction

If we can help people trust the origins of the Bible and its preservation, that invites trust in the message of this Book as one to be believed, obeyed, and delighted in.

II. The **Provision** of God's Word

A. Revelation

God has chosen to reveal Himself in and through the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

B. Inspiration

God, the primary Author of Scripture, works through human authors to communicate His message. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

"One of the most fundamental assertions about God is that he speaks." (E.J. Schnabel)

III. The Protection of God's Word

A. Canon

1. Canon defined

The 66 books we have in our Old and New Testaments are the boundaries for God's Word. We aren't missing anything, and we don't have anything extra.

This canon is the "standard" or "measure" by which all else should be judged.

2. Canon dismissed and/or debated

3. Canon defended

a. The idea of canonicity makes sense

- ▶ It makes sense that a personal God would want to communicate with us!

- ▶ It makes sense because of what we read in the Bible.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 (esp. vv. 18-19); Joshua 1:7-8; 22 Kings 22:8-10 (also 22:18-19; 23:1-3); Nehemiah 8:1-3; Luke 4:14-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Timothy 4:13; 2 Peter 3:15-16

b. The process of canonicity

- ▶ How detractors suggest it happened

Historical accident or agenda-driven power play

- ▶ A closer approximation to how it actually happened

+ The Old Testament

“...by the time of Jesus, the Old Testament canon enjoyed near universal agreement, and both Jesus and his early followers accepted that canon without question.”

Greg Gilbert, *Why Trust the Bible?*, p. 62

“...enough has been documented to clearly indicate that a core of Scripture existed from very early on and was most certainly not the creative invention of Irenaeus at the end of the second century or Constantine in the fourth century. Because the core was established so early, this would also mean that certain books simply could not be accepted as doctrine.”

- Jonathan Morrow,
Questioning the Bible: 11 Major Challenges to the Bible's Authority, p. 70

+ The New Testament

- “The remarkable fact about the development of the canon, then, is not the disagreements or the diversity - some of this is to be expected. **The remarkable fact is the impressively early agreement about the core books of the canon.** The fundamental unity around the four Gospels and the majority of Paul’s epistles at such an early time, and in the midst of such turmoil and dissension, is the fact of the canon that deserves mention and emphasis” (Kostenberger and Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy* , p. 160, bold emphasis added).
- “Images of early Christianity as a wide-open contest between books of every kind and from every place - a primitive writing competition of sorts - simply does not square with the convictions of early believers. In their understanding, there was something inherently closed about the canon from the very beginning, even in the midst of ongoing discussions. And this fact reveals that long before the fourth century there was a fundamental trend toward limitation and restriction, not invitation and expansion” (Kostenberger and Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy* , p. 171).
- Early evidence: The writings of Irenaeus and the Muratorian Canon

- “Criteria” for canonicity:
 - Apostolicity
 - Catholicity (i.e., universality)
 - Orthodoxy
 - Self-attestation

c. A key truth to keep in mind

As Christian, let’s not remove the supernatural from this! God cares about protecting the integrity of what He’s said! Let’s allow room for the Holy Spirit’s superintending work to lead the church towards canonization and the protection of God’s Word!

d. What about the Apocrypha? - Two big reasons the Apocrypha should not be given canonical weight:

- ▶ Apocrypha never directly quoted as Scripture in NT
- ▶ Apocrypha not accepted as canonical by the Jewish community

The thing to remember is that canonicity was not conferred by the church; it was confirmed by the church. The process of canonization is the process where the early church formally recognized what books were already understood to have the authority of God’s Word.

Psalm 119:16 (NIV):

I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

B. Transmission

1. Transmission

a. “For every practical purpose for which Christians use the Bible, the modern editions of the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament, like all the standard modern-language translations in use around the world today, can more than adequately function as remarkably close approximations of God’s inerrant autographs [i.e., the originals] and can guide us theologically and ethically in every walk of life...**we have massive amounts of support** for our convictions that the sixty-six books of the canonical Scriptures accepted by all branches of Christianity have been extraordinarily well preserved” (Craig L. Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?*, p. 40, bold emphasis added).

b. What does this “massive amount of support” include?

▶ Dating of manuscripts

▶ Number of manuscripts

2. Translation

IV. Conclusion:

If God has **provided** His Word and **protected** His Word, He has **purpose** for it. The final question we need to ask then, is this:

Am I lining up my life with the purposes in God's Word? (See esp. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 119)

“Except for aberrant translations produced by sects or cults to maintain their distinctive doctrines, every Bible on the market today is sufficiently faithful in its translation so that its readers can learn all of the fundamental truths of Christianity accurately.

The same events occur in all versions, the same characters appear, the same commands are given, the same wisdom is imparted, the same prophecies are articulated, the same doctrine promulgated, and so on. The differences are exceedingly minor compared to the overall similarities.”

- Craig L. Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?*, p. 85. Emphasis original.

Reflection Questions

How We Got the Bible

- ➔ Reflect on the Christian teaching that the Bible is *God's Word* - in and through this book, God reveals Himself and His ways to us, inviting us into a relationship with Him. How should this truth about what the Bible *is* shape the way we approach it?

- ➔ Given this value placed on the Bible (see above), why is the topic of "How We Got the Bible" important?

- ➔ Are there ways you've heard the origins or preservation of the Bible challenged, or denied? Briefly summarize these arguments you've heard.

- ➔ Look back through the "The Protection of God's Word" portion of your notes. What points were most helpful for you? Why?

- ➔ If God has **provided** His Word and **protected** His Word, He has **purpose** for it. Look at 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What purposes does God have for His Word, that we see here? How are any of these purposes playing out in your life? Explain.

- ➔ From this material on "How We Got the Bible," what are 1-2 things that are sticking out to you in a big way? Any lingering questions or other things you want to talk about related to this material?

For Further Study

How We Got the Bible

Blomberg, Craig L. *Can We Still Believe the Bible? An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions*. Brazos Press, 2014.

DeYoung, Kevin. *Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What that Means for You and Me*. Crossway, 2014.

Gilbert, Greg. *Why Trust the Bible?* Crossway, 2015.

Jones, Timothy Paul. *How We Got the Bible*. Rose Publishing, 2015.

Kruger, Michael J. *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books*. Crossway, 2012.

_____. "The Complete Series: Ten Basic Facts about the NT Canon that Every Christian Should Memorize." Posted at MichaelJKruger.com on March 5, 2013. Available online at <http://michaeljkruger.com/the-complete-series-ten-basic-facts-about-the-nt-canon-that-every-christian-should-memorize/> (last accessed September 29, 2016).

Morrow, Jonathan. *Questioning the Bible: 11 Major Challenges to the Bible's Authority*. Moody Publishers, 2014.