

THE NT Canon

How do we know we have
the right books?



THE NT Canon

Who gave us the Bible?



AD 100-300

The NT Canon

- **Canonical:** from a Greek word referring to the *rule* of faith and truth

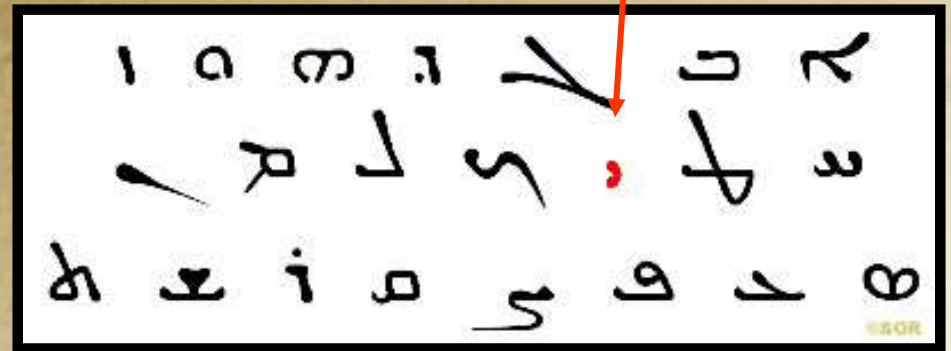
"Reed; measuring rod"



Trustworthiness of God's Word

Matthew 5:18 (KJV) - "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one **jot** or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

Matthew 5:18
in the Aramaic
language. The
jot is highlighted
in red.



Jews were fanatical scribes

- **“Take heed how thou doest thy work, for it is the work of heaven. Do not drop or add a letter lest thou become a destroyer of the world.”**
 - Counted each letter ...if mistake -- **destroy!**
 - Pronounced each word before writing it
 - Wiped pens before writing “God”, washed bodies before writing “Jehovah.”

Things began as ORAL

Mk 16:16 - “Go unto all the world and **preach** the gospel...”

2 Thess 2:15 “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether **by word or our epistle.**” NKJV

Word confirmed by signs!

Things began as ORAL

Jude 3 “It was necessary that I write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was **once delivered unto the saints.**”

1st century clear concept of truth

Transitioned to WRITTEN

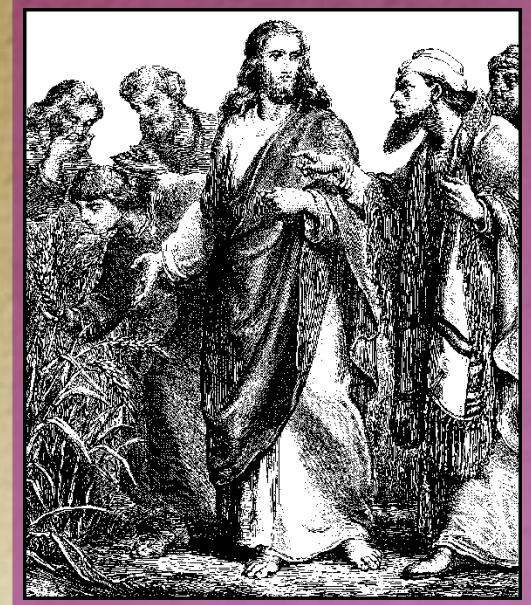
- Apostles stayed in contact with churches by writing. (II Thess 3:17)
- As apostles die off, written word becomes more important!
- Letters are to be circulated and read among the churches. (Rev 1:3).
- Written word was “fixation of the oral form.”

AD 45-96

Followers of Jesus

Followers of Jesus write eye-witness reports (Gospels), history, letters to other believers, and the Revelation.

- | | |
|-----------|---------|
| • Matthew | • Paul |
| • Mark | • James |
| • Luke | • Peter |
| • John | • Jude |



AD 100

New Testament

The original writings are copied and circulated so that by approximately AD 150 there is wide enough use of them to speak of the “New Testament” (“New Covenant”).



How did the inspired writing come to be accepted?

- The church acknowledged first what had **apostolic origin or sanction.**
- Books were not accepted because they were in a “canon” but were **authoritative immediately!**
- Later when questions arose, **research was done and conclusions reached.**

Muratorian Fragment
Origin lists 27 books

How did the inspired writing come to be accepted as such?

- **Early Christians had Divine help!**
 - **Warning about false writings! (2 Thess 2:2)**
 - **Divine Guidance by HS and apostles (Jn 16:13, I Tim 5:18, 2 Peter 3:15-16).**
 - **No church council/denomination “presented us with the canon.”**

How did the inspired writing come to be accepted as such?

- **Not true that the canon was not known until 4 or 5 century!**
- **“There is a difference between canonicity and recognition of canonicity.”**
- **“Second Peter was canonical all the time, no matter how long it was before it was generally known to the church.” Harvey Everest, *The Divine Demonstration*, 365.**

How did the inspired writing come to be accepted as such?

- Christ did not leave a list of “books.”
- He left guidelines, tests which are **scriptural and logical.**
 - **Test of apostolicity**
 - **Test of testimony**
 - **Test of orthodoxy**

Test of Apostolicity

- **Apostles were Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor 5:20).**
- **Gifted with miraculous credentials (Mk 16:17-20, 2 Cor 12:12).**
- **Listen to them, listen to Jesus! (Lk 10:16).**

Test of Apostolicity

- **Early Christians admonished:**
“Do not be quickly shaken, by spirit, word, or epistle..let no man beguile you...” (2 Thess 2:2)
- **What does Peter affirm?**
 - **2 Peter 3:2 “Comm. of the lord given through the apostles.”**

Test of Apostolicity

- **What does Peter affirm?**
 - **2 Peter 3:15-16** The Epistles of Paul are scripture!!
- **What does Paul affirm?**
 - **Paul = full apostolic weight (I Cor 2:9-16, 14:37).**
 - **Paul says Luke = scripture = I Tim 5:18 quotes Lk 10:7!**

Test of Apostolicity

- So... Matt, John, Peter, Paul, and Luke! (80% of NT)
- Could recognize *signature*!
 - I Cor 16:21, 2 Thess 3:17.
- Over 70% of NT never been in dispute!

Test of Spirit-filled testimony

Jn 16:3

- **Mark wrote down the sermons of Peter & Peter confirmed. (Papias, and others testified).**
- **Hebrews, James, and Jude?**
 - **Were individuals conversant with the facts! (Heb 13:22-25)**

Test of Orthodoxy

- A true prophet was based upon consistency with prior revelation. (Deut 13:1-3).
- If a prophet or book contradicted clear teaching...rejected! (Gal 1:6-8)
- “Every great truth is found in the unquestioned 70%.”

Sure standard!

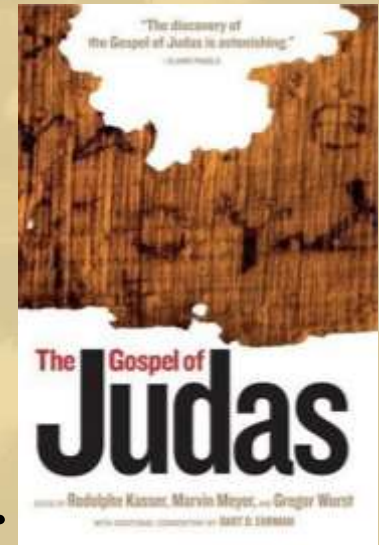
GOSPEL OF JUDAS

- ✦ *Gospel of Judas* is a Gnostic gospel that presents Judas positively.
- ✦ Gnosticism taught that one's spirit needs to escape from the prison of the human body.
- ✦ The book suggests that the betrayal of Jesus was done out of obedience to Jesus' specific instructions; Judas helped Jesus' spirit escape.

GOSPEL OF JUDAS

When was *Gospel of Judas* written?

- ✦ In 2006, scholars reconstructed most of the text from recently-published fragments.
- ✦ The book was originally written in Greek, but the available fragments come from a **third-century Coptic translation.**



GOSPEL OF JUDAS

What is the *Gospel of Judas*?

- ✦ **Where it was found:** El Minya, Egypt
- ✦ **Date it was written:** AD 160 to AD 180, over 130 years after Judas died.
- ✦ **Who is the author:** Unknown
- ✦ **What is the style:** Gnostic
- ✦ **What is the theme:** The loyalty of Judas

GOSPEL OF JUDAS

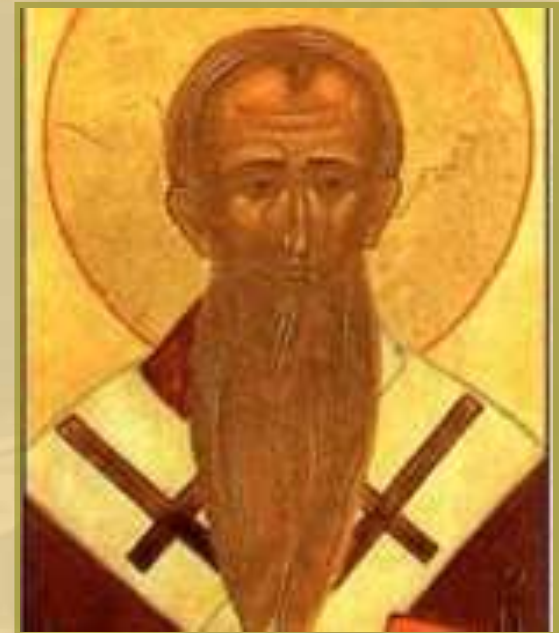
When was *Gospel of Judas* written?

✠ Historians have known

Lacked apostolicity
since AD 180.

Reliable Testimony
Rejected by church

father Irenaeus of Lyons
Orthodoxy
in AD 180.



Irenaeus

B.F. Wescott

“From the close of the *second century* the history of the canon is simple, and its proof clear. The NT was *composed essentially of the same books which we have at present*, and they were regarded with same reverence as is now shown them.”



AD 313

The Canon

The New Testament books are collected and circulated throughout the Mediterranean about the time of Constantine, the Roman Emperor, who legalizes Christianity in AD 313.



Constantine



AD 397

The Canon

The 27 books of the New Testament are formally confirmed as canonical by the Synod of Carthage in AD 397, thus recognizing three centuries of use by followers of Christ.



Conclusion

- **We do have the right books, and have since their inception.**
- **The Catholic church did not give us the Bible!**
- **God's canon or rule is clear! Will you respond to it?**