

REVELATION



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APPLICATION



COMMUNICATION

THE WRITTEN WORD

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, July 19, 2009

The Old Testament Canon

The Old Testament canon provides us with the full collection of God's written testimony to this world before the coming of Christ. In it, it was established that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON.

- A. Dr. Wayne Grudem underscores the importance of determining the extent of the canon of Scripture when he writes, "If we are to trust God absolutely we must have a collection of words that we are certain are God's words to us. If there are any sections of Scripture about which we have doubts whether they are God's words or not, we will not consider them to have absolute divine authority and we will not trust them as much as we would trust God himself."¹
- B. The trustworthiness of the Old Testament canon in particular is made even more important to us by the testimony of Jesus Himself. He told the Jews of His day that it was the Scriptures (of the Old Testament) that testified of Himself (John 5:39). He said that it was the prophets of the Old Testament who spoke concerning the necessity of His suffering and of His resurrection (Luke 24:25-26; 45-47); and that all the things written concerning Him in the Old Testament Scriptures must be fulfilled (v. 44). In other words, the reliability of our New Testament faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ was made by Him to depend upon the integrity of the Old Testament canon. (See also Romans 1:1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

II. THE FORMATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON.

The formation of the Old Testament canon differs in nature from that of the New Testament in at least three important ways:

- A. The New Testament canon was completed within approximately sixty years of its beginning; but the Old Testament canon took nearly eleven centuries to be completed.
- B. The standard by which the New Testament canon was established was apostolic (that is, books written by an apostle of Jesus Christ or by someone who was under the direct influence of an apostle); but the standard by which the Old Testament canon was established was prophetic (that is, books written by a prophet or by someone who was under the direct influence of a prophet).
- C. The New Testament canon is, in part, dependent upon the Old Testament Scriptures in that the New Testament writers cited the Old Testament prophets for the authority of their doctrines.

III. THE PROGRESS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON.

- A. The earliest "canon" of Scripture was the Ten Commandments that God gave Moses, written in stone by the finger of God Himself (Exodus 31:18; 32:16), and placed inside the ark of the covenant (40:20).

- B. In time, God gave additional revelation to Moses--a completed copy of which (called the Book of the Law) was also placed inside the ark (Deuteronomy 31:24-26). It constituted the first five books of Moses.
- C. Joshua--Moses' successor over Israel--also wrote the history of the people of God as they entered the promised land; and included it in the Book of the Law (Joshua 24:26; see also 1:8).
- D. Later prophets recorded the history of Israel and its kings; and their writings were also recognized as words from God (1 Samuel 10:25; 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 32:32; 33:19; 35:27; Jeremiah 30:2). In addition, they also affirmed the authority of the books of Moses (see 1 Kings 2:3; 8:53, 56, 61; Ezra 6:18, Nehemiah 13:1; Jeremiah 8:8; Daniel 9:11, 13; Malachi 4:4).
- E. The authority of the book of the Psalms was recognized in its use for worship (2 Chronicles 29:25-30).
- F. The authority of the prophets is established by their own internal testimony.
1. They specifically claim to be the word of God (as examples, see Isaiah 6:6-10; 8:1ff; Jeremiah 1:5, 9-10, 11ff; Ezekiel 2:2-3:11, 16ff; Daniel 10:14; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 1:3ff; Obadiah 1ff; Jonah 1:1; 3:; 4:4, 9-11; Micah 1:1ff; Nahum 1:12; Habakkuk 1:5-11; 2:2ff; Zephaniah 1:1ff; Haggai 1:1ff; Zechariah 1:1ff; Malachi 1:1, 14; 2:4, 8, 16; 3:1, 6-7, 13, 17; 4:1, 3).
 2. They substantiate that claim by fulfilled prophecy (as notable examples, see Isaiah 7:14; 44:28-45:1; 53:1-12; Daniel 11-12; Habakkuk 1:5-11; Haggai 2:15-19; Malachi 3:1).

¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervon, 1994, 2000), p. 54.