

Canon Clarity

Why we can trust the 66 books of Scripture as God's complete and authoritative revelation?

Part 1 – The Old Testament

Introduction (1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Heb. 1:1-2).

- I. The nature of prophecy
 - A. A Prophet called (Ex 3:2).
 - B. A Prophet authenticated (Ex. 4:1-3).
 - C. A Prophet spoke as God instructed: Ex. 4:10-17
 - D. The People Receive the message as authoritative (Ex. 4:28-31).
 - E. Voice of prophet equated with voice of God (Ex. 15:26).
 - F. Raising of a future prophet like Moses (Dt 18:15, 18):
 - G. God expects obedience when his prophet speaks (Dt. 18:19)
 - H. True prophets speak accurately (Dt 18:20-22)
- II. Written Scripture
 - A. God gives written revelation (Ex 31:18; Dt. 10:4-5):
 - B. Moses writes Scripture (Dt 31:9-13).
 - C. The writings deposited by the Ark in the Tabernacle (Dt 31:24-26)
 - D. The rise of one not like Moses (Dt. 34:9-12).
 - E. Yahweh speaks to Joshua and the people obey him (Josh 1:1-2; 16-18).
 - F. Joshua authenticated by God (Josh 4:14).
 - G. Yahweh appears to Joshua (Josh 5:13-15)
 - H. Joshua speaks God's Words and writes in the law of God (Josh 23-24).
 - I. Samuel confirmed as prophet (1 Sam 3:20)
 - J. Samuel's writings placed in Sanctuary (1 Sam 10:25)
 - K. Chronicles of Samuel, Nathan, and Gad (1 Chr 29:29)
 - L. David the prophet (2 Sam 23:1, Acts 2:30).
 - M. The Temple erected during Solomon's reign (1 Kings 8:6-9; 2 Chr 5:7-10)
 - N. Solomon received supernatural wisdom and understanding beyond measure (1 Kings 4).
 - O. Solomon's proverbs transcribed (Proverbs 25:1).
 - P. Solomon claims divine authority for his writings (Eccl 12:11)
 - Q. Psalmists beyond recognized as prophets and seers (1 Chro 25:1; 2 Chro 29:30).
 - R. The Prophet Isaiah writes Scripture (Isaiah 8:1; 30:8; 34:16)
 - S. Jeremiah writes Scripture (Jer 30:1-3; 36:1-3; 6-8; 20; 2 Chro 36:21)
 - T. During the exile (Ezra 7:6, 10; Neh. 8:1, 14-15; 9:26)
 - U. After the exile (Nehemiah 8:1, 14-15) And all the people gathered as one man at
 - V. Ezra affirms God spoke through prophet (Nehemiah 9:26)

W. The last of the Old Testament prophets:

III. Intertestamental Canon Collections

A. Nehemiah's Library (2 Macc. 2:13).

¹³ And the same things are related also in the *records and in the memoirs according to Nehemiah*, and that, upon founding a library, he gathered together the documents concerning the kings and the prophets and those of David and the epistles of the kings concerning dedicated items.

B. Judas Maccabeus's collection (2 Mac. 2:14-15).

¹⁴ And in the same way also Judas gathered together these things that were spread abroad on account of our war, and they are with us. ¹⁵ So then, if you have need of them, send some people to bring them back to you.

IV. Jewish perspectives on the close of the Canon and cessation of prophecy.

A. The Rabbinic View (2nd to 4th century AD).

i. "With the death of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi the latter prophets, the Holy Spirit ceased out of Israel." (Tos. Sotah 13.2; Baraita in Bab. Yoma 9b, bab. Sotah 48b and Bab. Sanhedrin 11a).

ii. "Until then [the coming of Alexander the Great and the end of the empire of the Persians] the prophets prophesied through the Holy Spirit. From then on, "incline thine ear and hear the words of the wise" (Seder Olam Rabbah 30, quoting Prov. 22:17).

iii. "Rab Samuel bar Inia said, in the name of Rab Aha, 'The Second Temple lacked five things which the First Temple possessed, namely the fire, the ark, the Urim and Thummim, the oil of anointing and the Holy Spirit [of prophecy]" (Jer. Taanith 2.1; Jer. Makkath 2.4-8; Bab. Yoma 21b).

B. First century View (1st Century AD)

i. 2 Esdras

ii. Josephus

C. Intertestamental view (2nd Century BC)

i. 1 Maccabees 4:46 and 14:41

ii. 1 Maccabees 9:27:

²⁷ And there was great distress in Israel, such that had never happened from that time when the prophet had ceased from being seen among them.

V. The Content of the Canon

A. Josephus (1st Century AD)

It therefore naturally, or rather necessarily, follows (seeing that with us it is not open to everybody to write the records, and that there is no discrepancy in what it written; seeing that, on the contrary, the prophets alone had this privilege, obtaining their knowledge of the most remote and ancient history through the inspiration which came to them from God, and committing to writing a clear account of the events of their own time just as they occurred), it follows, I say, that we do not possess myriads of inconsistent books, conflicting with one another [as the Greeks do]; but our books, those which are justly believed, are only 22, and contain the record of all time.

Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising laws and the traditional history from the birth of man down to Moses's death. This period falls only a little short of 3,000 years.

From the death of Moses down to Artaxerxes who followed Xerxes as king of Persia, the prophets after Moses wrote the events of their own times in thirteen books.

The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life.

From Artaxerxes down to our own time, the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of like trust with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets.

We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own Scriptures. For although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured to add, or to remove, or to alter anything, and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and (if need be) cheerfully to die for them. Time and again now the sight has been witnessed of prisoners enduring tortures and death in every form in the theatres rather than utter a single word against the laws and the accompanying records

– *Against Apion* 1.7f., or 1.37-32.

B. Jubilees (2nd Century BC).

C. What did the 22 book Canon consist of?

Josephus's Canon

Books of Moses	5 books
Prophets After Moses to Artaxerxes	13 books
Hymns and Precepts for conduct of life	4 books
Total	22 books

5 Books of Moses

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy

13 Books of the Prophets from Moses to Artaxerxes

Job

Joshua

Judges (possibly +Ruth)

Samuel (1 & 2)

Kings (1 & 2)

Isaiah

Jeremiah (+Lamentations)

Ezekiel

The Twelve Prophets (12 Minor Prophets Hosea – Malachi)

Daniel

Chronicles (1 & 2)

Ezra-Nehemiah

Esther

4 books of Hymns and Precepts for conduct of life

Psalms (possibly + Ruth)

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Songs

D. Early Church fathers view on the Canon.

E. What about the Council of Jamnia?

F. What about the Apocrypha?