

# A Firm Foundation 5

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Preacher: Tom Schmidt

- [ 0 : 0 0 ] All right, everybody, let's get started. Welcome. We're talking about the reliability of the New Testament in this kind of sub-series of our larger series about Scripture.
- And we're in class two. Last week, we talked about the preservation of the New Testament. We spoke about how the New Testament has been extraordinarily preserved throughout the centuries, and thus ensuring that we have access to the original words of the apostles.
- And then this week, today, we're going to be talking about the canonicity of the New Testament. And with this, I'll answer questions like, who decided what books were in the New Testament?
- And how was the New Testament put together? And what about all those false gospels we hear about sometimes? Why aren't those in the Bible? And then a couple weeks from now, we're going to look at the accuracy of the New Testament, and we'll talk about how the New Testament is historically reliable, how it's true, and how it's trustworthy.
- So that's what we're going to cover today. Let's open in prayer together. Father in heaven, we thank you for this opportunity to not just study your word, but to learn about your word and how you saw fit to assemble it for us.
- [ 1 : 1 9 ] Father, we ask you to send your Holy Spirit into this time right now, that you'd put him in our hearts to guide us into truth, to encourage us, and to move us closer to you, and to help us to grow in your truth, in knowledge of your word, in love for you, love for one another, to grow in humility and gentleness of heart.
- And we pray this in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen. All right. So if you're like me, you might have a lot of questions. You might even have some concerns about how the Bible was put together.
- You might sometimes wonder how things got in there. What if someone messed up? What if someone put things in the Bible that shouldn't be there, or maybe took some things out that should be there? And so today, I want us to consider these questions and look at the answers that we have for them.
- And my hope is that after today, you'll see a glimpse of how God has worked by his Holy Spirit to not just inspire and preserve the New Testament, but also to assemble it and to put it together.
- And so before we talk about that, before we talk about how the New Testament was assembled and formed and put together, I first just need to give a brief word about what the New Testament is made up of.
- [ 2 : 3 2 ] The New Testament is a collection of 27 books and letters that were written under the authority of Jesus's apostles. These apostles, these disciples of Jesus were commissioned by him.
- He gave authority to them to teach and to preach his gospel and to explain Christian doctrine. Now, there's a lot of misconceptions or even false theories about how these apostolic documents were assembled into the New Testament.

And you've likely heard some of these misconceptions or theories. You might even believe some of these things. And so I think it'd be good to start our time off by going through some of these misconceptions or false theories about how the Bible got put together.

And so we're going to do that first. We're going to start by just going through some of these that you hear about, and I'll address each one in turn. So perhaps the one that I'll talk about first, I call this one the Bible drop down from heaven theory.

And most people, they don't often put it in so many words, even if this is kind of what they believe. But basically, this theory assumes that the Bible was created outside of time, outside of history, without human hands, and just presented to us on earth in a nice, neat little package.

[ 3 : 47 ] And this is actually, substantively, the theory for other holy books of other religions. So for instance, the Quran, the holy text in Islam, Muslims traditionally believe that it was written on tablets in heaven and then brought down to earth, where Muhammad, their prophet, memorized it and then presented it.

Mormons believe this about the Book of Mormon, that Joseph Smith found some gold tablets that were written, and he transcribed them and presented this Book of Mormon. But this is, of course, not how the Bible was written.

And the Bible is very clear on this. If you just glance at it, you'll see that the Bible was written by humans and in human history. It's made up of dozens of different books, written by many different authors living in hundreds, if not thousands, of miles apart, and hundreds, if not thousands, of years apart as well.

And God saw fit to inspire prophets over the ages to write his word. And because God is a God of love who delights in humans, who delights in his children, he welcomed them to become part of this process of writing scripture and inspired some of these prophets.

And that's where our Bible comes from today. So this whole theory of the Bible kind of drop down from heaven theory, it's not really an accurate way to understand how the Bible was put together.

[ 5 : 11 ] A second common false view is, I call this the conspiracy view. This view maintains that sometime in the early 4th century, maybe 300 years after Jesus, the Roman Emperor Constantine or an early Pope, they plotted or they colluded to manufacture the New Testament.

Constantine, of course, is known as the first Christian emperor of Rome. He came to power in the early 300s. And the running assumption behind this theory, you'll find this in popular culture sometimes, is that Constantine and this early Pope were pretty bad guys, and they're sitting in some smoke-filled room colluding, and they put stuff in the Bible that shouldn't be there, and they took stuff out that should have been in there, probably while committing all sorts of other horrible crimes.

And if any of you are familiar with the Da Vinci Code, it was popular some years ago, the author Dan Brown posits this very theory. But, of course, neither Constantine nor an early Pope decided what was in the Bible.

This is, in fact, so false, it's hard to believe it has much currency today. There's simply no evidence that Constantine or an early Pope ever decided what was in the New Testament, and there's a whole lot of evidence against it.

In fact, even if Constantine or some early Pope did try and decide what was in the New Testament, their power only extended to Roman territory.

[ 6 : 33 ] And by the 4th century, Christianity was so far widespread beyond the Roman Empire, which you can see there in red or pink, that even if they had decided this, they had no power over the Sassanian Empire in the East or Ethiopia in the South.

There was no phone lines. They couldn't pick up a phone and tell people what was in their Bible. And even if they did, they would have been ignored because these folks are in other power centers far removed from Rome.

And in fact, we do have some later examples in the 4th and 5th century of Christians in these areas specifically ignoring what Roman Christians were doing. And so this theory of an early Pope or Bishop of Rome or an early Roman Emperor colluding to manufacture, it's just not true.

They didn't decide what was in the New Testament. So that's another misconception, another false theory about how the Bible got put together. But let's keep moving. Let's talk about a third theory.

This one I call the Ecumenical Church Council Theory. So this theory maintains that there was some ecumenical church council, by ecumenical, I mean universal or worldwide.

[ 7 : 47 ] And this council happened sometime way back in antiquity. And this council had representatives from all the churches of the world. And this council codified the contents of the New Testament.

Well, many Christians will be surprised to learn that this is not true. There was no ecumenical worldwide church council that ratified the contents of the New Testament or decided what books were in it.

There were, of course, various smaller local regional councils that sometimes issued New Testament lists way back in antiquity. But these had limited influence just to their general area.

And so there was no worldwide council that had some kind of binding power that decided what was in the New Testament. The closest we can come to is something like this, the Council of Trulow in Constantinople in 692.

This was a large council. It did issue some edicts about the contents of the New Testament. But the problem with the Council of Trulow, it was only a Roman council.

[ 8 : 50 ] Only the Roman Empire really accepted this. And as I've already shown, Christianity was far, far more widespread than the Roman Empire. We could say the same thing about the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 CE.

They did the same thing. But again, just a Roman council. If we go earlier, like the Council of Hippo in 393, Hippo is kind of a funny name, I know.

That's where Augustine was bishop back in 393. They did issue a list of New Testament books as well. And they're, of course, much earlier. But again, this was a regional council.

It was even smaller than the Roman Empire. It was just Northwest Africa. So this theory, the ecumenical church council theory, it's an attractive theory.

But it's also not true. Now, this next theory has probably the most truth to it of the ones that we've looked at. This theory states that the apostles collected the New Testament.

[ 9 : 54 ] So according to this theory, the apostles of Jesus, they not only supervised the writing of the New Testament, they also helped collect the New Testament documents and assemble them together in a single book.

Sometimes you hear, for example, that John, the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, the last surviving disciple of Jesus and author of the book of Revelation, sometimes you hear that he was responsible for sealing the New Testament.

And some people find evidence for this with John's last words in the last verses of the New Testament, where he says in the book of Revelation, if anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book.

And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the book of life and from the holy city and from the things which are written in this book. Now, there is good reason to believe that John and other apostles did help assemble at least part of the New Testament.

For example, the ancient Christian writer Eusebius, he's writing around the year 311. He's famous for kind of being the father of history. He was a fantastic historian. He writes that the apostle John accepted the other three gospels by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and that he bore witness to their truthfulness.

[ 11 : 10 ] And then he wrote his fourth gospel, the gospel of John, as a supplement to the other three. And certainly it seems probable that the apostles did play a role in gathering the New Testament together.

Not just John, but for instance, the second letter of Peter, he talks about Paul's letters. He mentions them as scripture. Peter seems to be affirming these letters as something that Christians should obey and consider as the inspired word of God.

Peter also mentions Mark as being a very faithful Christian. Mark, of course, wrote the gospel of Mark. And in fact, an early Christian writer named Papias, writing around the year 115 AD, he tells us that Mark recorded Peter's preaching and that Peter approved of it and that that's what the gospel of Mark is.

So Peter and John seem to have played some kind of role. Paul, the apostle, he also seems to have played a role in the collection of his own letters or at least some of his followers, maybe Timothy or Silas did.

Paul also in 1 Timothy, I believe it's 1 Timothy 5, 17 through 18, he seems to call the gospel of Luke scripture. He seems to be affirming the gospel of Luke as part of scripture.

[ 12 : 25 ] So this theory that the apostles played a significant role in collecting and assembling the documents of the New Testament, this is a very reasonable theory. They clearly played a large role in that.

But we don't have any explicit evidence that one or some of the apostles collected all 27 books of the New Testament. And it would seem likely that early Christian writings would mention this fact if it had happened, but they don't insofar as I'm aware.

And there's also a problem in that it seems like probably the last book to be written was the book of Revelation by John. But John wrote this when he was in exile on an island and there were other apostles scattered around the whole world.

It almost seems like they wouldn't have had an opportunity to collect all these things before they passed away, at least the final documents that were written. So definitely it seems like the apostles played a significant role, but that's not the whole story.

So if this is the case, who decided what was in the New Testament? How did it come to include the 27 books that we have today? At some point, or at this point, I should say, some people start scratching their heads and begin wondering what other options are even available if these four theories aren't the whole truth.

[ 13 : 47 ] Well, the answer is, I think, a wonderful testimony to God's guiding spirit throughout the history of the church. And here's the answer. The answer of how the New Testament was assembled is that it was not assembled in one place or time by one person or group.

Rather, the New Testament was assembled by various churches throughout history, relatively independently of one another, and it was done so many times. Many times, and this all began in the very early church of the second century.

Back then, when these churches were gathering the contents of the New Testament, they all had one overriding factor. They wanted to identify documents that were published by the apostles or were published with their supervision.

And from the very beginning, there was broad agreement over what these documents included, and any disagreements were met with careful consideration, with prayer, and with research.

And the remarkable, perhaps even this stunning result, is that every ancient Christian community eventually came to use the very same 27-book New Testament that we have today.

[ 14 : 55 ] In other words, the same New Testament remarkably emerged in multiple churches relatively independently of one another, just like how God used multiple people over many countries and many languages to write his Bible, he also used many people over many countries to put it together.

Now, you might be a little skeptical about this, so I think it might be helpful if I showed you what this process of putting the New Testament together looks like.

So that's what we'll do right now. To do this, I want us to travel back in time, just about 2,000 years to the very beginning of the Christian church, to those first few decades after the resurrection of Jesus, when the apostles are traveling around the world and preaching the gospel of salvation.

And if we go to, say, 45 AD, let's say to ancient Corinth, and if we peek in on a church service at this time in the church of Corinth, we'll notice something about their Bible.

We'll notice that in 45 AD, they didn't have a New Testament, and that's because the New Testament didn't exist yet. It hadn't been written yet. These very first Christians, like those in Corinth, they did not have the New Testament because, like I said, the apostles hadn't started writing it yet.

[ 16 : 09 ] The scriptures that they held to were the Old Testament. The earliest New Testament scriptures were written within a few years of 50 AD or so, and so in 45 AD, none of them had been written yet.

It's only 15 years or so, maybe even less after the resurrection of Jesus, and so this church is using the Old Testament. But if we stick around in Corinth long enough and keep going to their church services faithfully every Sunday, there will eventually come a day when the Corinthians get a letter from a guy named the Apostle Paul.

And we now call this letter 1 Corinthians, and it's in our New Testament today. And because in 45 AD, Paul was an apostle of Jesus, commissioned by Jesus to have great authority to preach and to teach, the Corinthians get this letter and they start reading Paul's letter aloud in their church services alongside the Old Testament.

And this is actually something Paul instructed them to do. In some of his letters, he says, make sure you read this out loud in your church service. And the Corinthians then start sending this letter around to their neighboring churches in Greece, in Philippi, in Thessalonica, which is, again, something Paul told his churches to do.

And those churches in Thessalonica and Philippi begin sending the Corinthians their letters from apostles, which we now call 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philippians. And all of a sudden, perhaps without them even realizing it, the New Testament is being born.

[ 17 : 46 ] And over the next 30 or 40 years, various apostles wrote or supervised the composition of New Testament documents. And over these decades and afterwards, Christians began exchanging and verifying these documents to make sure they actually came from the apostles.

And sometimes churches would find that a document they had accepted as being apostolic really wasn't. And they would reject it. We actually have witnesses of this in the New Testament, in 2 Thessalonians, when Paul says, don't be troubled by a letter as if from me saying that the day of the Lord has come.

Don't believe it. And so he's giving them instructions on like, you got to test these documents, people. Now, this process of gathering and evaluating and verifying the documents, documents is apostolic.

This took some time. This is in part because the Christian church expanded so rapidly over many thousands of miles that it was often difficult to communicate with one another. It's easy when you're all hanging out in Greece and Macedonia, like these three churches you see on the screen.

But by 200 AD, the Christian church had spread to Spain, to Northwest Africa, to Great Britain, to France, to Germany, to Asia Minor, and Greece, and to Egypt, to what we start calling Mesopotamia, the Middle East, to Persia, even into Central Asia, Nubia, Ethiopia, all the way to Western China, and even Northwest India by 200 AD.

[ 19 : 08 ] And so, it took quite some time for these apostolic documents to be distributed and translated into all these various languages. Remember, there was no email, no printing press, no typewriter, things like that.

So, things did take a bit of time. But, what we can say is that the early churches had broad agreement on the contents of the New Testament, and though it took some time for things to settle down, they eventually did arrive on complete agreement about what the New Testament would look like.

And if you're curious, we can observe this agreement emerging for ourselves. if we can go back and canvas early Christian writings in the 2nd through 3rd centuries and see these discussions over the New Testament taking place and watch this general agreement arise for ourselves.

So, just like how we went back to 45 AD to check out the Church of Corinth, we can go to 175 AD and start canvassing Christian documents to see what their New Testament was like and see what their New Testament included.

So, for instance, in 175 AD, there's a document called the Muratorian Fragment. It's from Rome and it contains a discussion of the New Testament, of what their New Testament is.

[ 20 : 30 ] Now, unfortunately, this document is very old and we're missing the beginning of it and probably the end of it. So, it's not a complete discussion of the New Testament.

In fact, it begins with this half-broken sentence and then says, the third gospel is Luke. Well, if you, so we know they had, we know they had two other ones.

Then they have Luke and then they talk about John. So, we know there were four gospels. There was Luke, there was John and then the little half sentence really implies its mark. It doesn't have the name mark in it, but what it's talking about really implies mark.

So, anyway, if we go through this document, we can chart out what their New Testament looked like and I have this on the screen here. I know this is small font, but I wanted to get the whole New Testament on here.

On the left-hand side, you see a list of New Testament books in canonical order from Matthew down to Revelation and then in the second column, it's a chart of the Muratorian fragment and what documents this fragment includes as part of its New Testament and if it has the letter C in one of its rows, that means there's a direct citation of this document and you'll notice some things.

[ 21 : 44 ] First of all, they have a large chunk of our New Testament. Now, like I said, it's missing the beginning, but it's reasonable to think that they had Matthew and Mark.

We can't be 100% sure, but they certainly had Luke, John, Acts, and the letters of Paul. They had 1st and 2nd John. They have Jude and Revelation. You'll notice that I've got some question marks here on 1st and 2nd Peter and we don't have anything for Hebrews and James.

This is because these documents are not mentioned, but remember, we're missing the whole document. So we don't have the whole list. We have part of the list and the document doesn't talk about the New Testament books in the same order that we have them today.

For instance, it talks about 1st John with the Gospel of John. So there's a chance and I think a fairly reasonable one that it talked about 1st Peter, maybe 2nd Peter when it was speaking about Mark because Mark was the interpreter of Peter and recorded Peter's statements.

Same with Hebrews and James. Matthew is the Gospel that's often written. It's thought of as a Jewish Gospel. It's written for the Jews and Hebrews and James are the two letters that are written to Jews specifically.

[ 22 : 56 ] So it's possible that when it spoke about Matthew, it was also speaking about Hebrews and James. We're not sure. I have a question mark by 3rd John. That's because there's some ambiguity.

It mentions multiple letters of John but it doesn't say how many. So is it 2? Is it 3? We don't really know. But what you can see is that this New Testament, the core of the New Testament of this community is exactly the same as ours and if we had the whole list, it might have been exactly the same.

We don't know. There may be some extraneous minor differences but we're not sure. So we just peeked in one church around 175 in Rome but we can keep doing this.

We can do this for 185 with a theologian named Irenaeus. He wrote this wonderful book of theology. It's actually the first comprehensive theology, a book of theology that we have from a Christian and he's writing in France in 185 and we can go through this book of theology and just see what does he cite from the New Testament and try and come up with what his New Testament looked like.

So we have this list from the Muratorian fragment and we can add this one from Irenaeus and we'll see that he's got Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, all the letters of Paul except he doesn't mention Philemon.

[ 24 : 14 ] He also has 1 and 2 John, 1 Peter, Revelation. You'll notice though, like I said, he doesn't mention Philemon, he doesn't mention 3 John, he doesn't mention Jude but remember that Irenaeus is not giving us a list of New Testament books.

He's just writing a work of theology, citing the New Testament whenever it's relevant and you'll notice something about Philemon and 3 John and Jude is they're really, really tiny.

They're only a paragraph or two long and you've got to write a lot of theology before you have an opportunity to mention these books. So it's not that we think these were out of his New Testament, they very well could have been in his New Testament, we just don't know.

He didn't happen to cite them in this book. I've got a question mark with Hebrews. He definitely knows Hebrews but we're not sure if he included it in his New Testament or not but we know he's aware of it.

I have a question mark with James and 2 Peter and that's because he seems to quote them but it's not certain. You know, sometimes people will just take a lot of language from a New Testament book but not say, oh, this is from James and that seems to be like he's doing what he's doing but we're not totally sure.

[ 25 : 29 ] Nevertheless, his New Testament looks an awful lot like ours. Maybe if we could have had him make a list it would have been exactly like ours. We just don't know. Also, Irenaeus is very clear.

He says elsewhere that there are only four Gospels. He also says that New Testament documents need to come from the Apostles and be written under their supervision.

So he gives us kind of this broad outline of what the New Testament should contain. But let's keep going. We can do this same project with a theologian named Tertullian in 200 A.D.

in Northwest Africa writing in Latin. So we're on another continent now and his New Testament is very similar. Now remember, Tertullian, he's not giving us a list.

He's just writing some theology but he's got most of what our New Testament has today. He has 1 Peter, he has 1 John, he has Jude, he does mention Jude, he mentions Revelation.

[ 26 : 26 ] He is missing some things like James and 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John but again, we don't know if those were omitted or if he just never had reason to quote from them. We can't be sure.

Let's keep going. We'll go to same time frame, 200 A.D. in Egypt, a guy named Clement of Alexandria, another theologian. So this is thousands of miles away from Tertullian writing in a different language.

What does he have? Well, if we add him, we see that he quotes from all 27 books of the New Testament and we see this again around 200, 230 A.D.

This is when the old Latin translation of the Bible was commissioned. We're not entirely sure of the date. I said 230 to be conservative. It could easily be earlier than that.

It could easily be 200 or 180 or something. But this was, as far as we know, the first full-scale translation of the New Testament into another language. There certainly were smaller translations beforehand.

[ 27 : 27 ] You know, someone takes a quick letter and makes a translation of it. This seems to be the first full-scale one that we're aware of. And scholars have to do a lot of work to try and piece together what was included in this full-scale translation.

And it seems like the Old Latin included all 27 books of the New Testament around 230 A.D. We've got one more guy we're going to check out.

This is further east in Caesarea Palestine, a theologian named Origen in 245. Origen gives us the first complete list of New Testament books. Remember, we did have a list in the Muratorian fragment in 175, but it wasn't complete.

We're missing part of it. Origen gives us the first list. And if you look at his list, his list includes all 27 books that we have in our New Testament.

Now, some scholars debate if this list has been properly preserved, but what we can say for certain is that if we go manually through Origen's writings, he does mention all 27 books of the New Testament.

[ 28 : 31 ] So even if his list has been not preserved properly, we do know he was aware of all 27 books in the New Testament. So, all of those were in Latin or Greek.

So, Irenaeus is writing in France, he's writing in Greek, Tertullian is writing in Latin, Clement is Greek, the Old Latin Bible is Latin, Origen is Greek, and the Muratorian fragment, it's in Latin.

Some people think it was originally Greek and it was translated, but we only have it in Latin today. Were there any additional books that they mentioned? Oh, great. Yes, I'm going to be getting to that in a little bit.

Yes, yes, yes, there were. And we'll talk about that in just a moment. Amos. I have a question. Are there, like, comparable lists from outside the Roman Empire?

Not yet. Not yet at this point. Outside the Roman Empire. Now, remember, Christianity is still, at this point, a persecuted group.



[ 29 : 42 ] And so, there is no political authority to control the Bible. So, this is well before Christianity came to power in the Roman Empire. So, these are all happening somewhat independently of one another.

And in fact, Tertullian, he ended up separating from the Roman Church over a matter of doctrine. Not a core theological doctrine, but he separated.

So, some of these, some of these people are not even part of necessarily the same Christian community, even though they all have the same statement of faith. I mean, we would, if we read his confession of faith with these others, we would agree with them all.

Does that help? So, at this point, we don't have a list outside of the Roman Empire yet. So, we could keep doing this over decades and centuries. And like I said, we would eventually see all the ancient churches clustering around 27 documents that we have today in our New Testament.

And, like I said, there's two remarkable things about this. One is that there was very early agreement within the contents of the New Testament, as you can see on the screen.

[ 30 : 52 ] Secondly, is like I said, eventually all the churches with ancient roots came to agree on this 27-book New Testament. It did take a long time in some places, particularly the places that were farther flung from where the original locations of these documents were written.

But, eventually, they all ended up agreeing. So, to sum up, the assembly of the New Testament, this New Testament did not fall out of heaven.

There was no conspiracy theory. There was no single ecumenical council. There really was actually no single uniting factor other than the Holy Spirit. And, the Holy Spirit guided the apostles to write the New Testament and to begin assembling it.

And then, their later churches they left behind, independently of one another, somewhat, investigated and tested which documents were apostolic. And, eventually, everyone arrived at the same 27-book New Testament, even if it took a long time in some places.

So, some of you might still have some questions. Like, what New Testament books were controversial? Was there any books in the New Testament today that the ancient church maybe was a little uncomfortable about?

[ 32 : 03 ] Well, we could make a list of these and I've done that for you. And, these are the books that when you go back and you read the early debates, these are the books that are in our New Testament today that sometimes you'll find an ancient Christian disagreed with.

And, I'm going to address each of these in turn. So, Hebrews. Hebrews was suspicious in the Latin church for a little bit. It was not suspicious in the Greek church. But, in the Latin church it was and it was because it was anonymous.

They wanted to make sure that this was written under apostolic authority and so, some of them were a little suspicious of it. Interestingly, Hebrews actually has some of the earliest attestation of any New Testament document.

There's a Christian writing in 96 A.D. who is aware of the letter of Hebrews. So, it has very early attestation. I'm actually encouraged that the early church took authorship so seriously that they didn't just want to throw everything in just because they liked it.

James also took some time. Now, there's a good reason for this. If you read James, it's addressed to the 12 tribes of Israel, to the Jews.

[ 33 : 14 ] And the evidence we have from the early church is almost entirely from Gentile churches. The Romans, the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Northwest Africans. And so, in other words, this letter wasn't actually written to them initially.

And it makes sense that it would just take some time to percolate and for them to come to accept it. The next letters, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, they all share the characteristic of being pretty short.

They're very short. And so, some of, like that guy I mentioned, Eusebius, who's writing around the year 300, he's investigating these things and he reports, he's like, you know, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, they're not mentioned a whole lot in the super ancient Christian writings and we saw that in our chart.

And the reason why may simply have just been that they were just so short. You've got to listen to a lot of sermons, you've got to read a lot of theology before you find citations of 3 John and 2 John and Jude.

And we actually can test this if we look at Augustine's writings, Augustine, St. Augustine, he's writing around the year 400. We know what his New Testament contained because he tells us, he gives us a list.

[ 34 : 29 ] He also attended a council that he headed that also issued a list. He has a 27 book New Testament. Augustine wrote 5 million words. He wrote an enormous amount.

It's the equivalent of writing a 300 page book every year for 40 years. And if you go through his 5 million writings, you find that he only quotes from 2 and 3 John like once or twice, which means he's only quoting from them, you know, once every one or 2 million words that he writes.

That's a lot of words. And in the early church, we don't even have 5 million words from the early church when you combine it all together. So there's good reasons why these smaller documents may not have come up as much.

The last one, Revelation, the last one was actually not controversial in the early church. The early church universally accepted this.

It is quoted constantly in Latin and in Greek from the very beginning of the 2nd century and all throughout the 3rd century. The problem with Revelation is that in the 4th and 5th century, some Christians, it kind of fell out of favor to be honest.

[ 35 : 43 ] And some Christians started removing it from their New Testament. So it wasn't controversial in the early church. In the later church, it was controversial in certain churches, but then eventually came back in.

So those were the books that are in our New Testament today that met with some controversy at some points. But what about books that almost made it into the Bible but didn't?

What about those? I'm interested in those. Well, I guess in a way, I would say there's actually no book that almost made it in but didn't.

There were some books, though, that some people thought should be in at some point, but many people didn't. And so in other words, there are some texts that some early Christian churches included, but I would not say most of them did.

It was not like they almost made it in but didn't. It's just that maybe there'd be some churches that were reading this, but most weren't. And here they are. These are books like this, The Epistle of Barnabas.

[ 36 : 48 ] I'm going to talk about each one of these in turn. First Clement. It's a letter by a guy named Clement. A book called The Shepherd of Hermas. A document called The Gospel of the Hebrews. And another document called The Dietessaron.

Now you're looking at the Epistle of Barnabas and you're like, I've heard that guy before. And that's because Barnabas is in the Bible. He's one of the early followers of the apostles. He's called an apostle sometimes.

And this letter, it's a long letter. It's an early Christian letter. It probably comes from the year 100 or 120. But it's not by Barnabas. It doesn't claim to be by Barnabas either.

But later Christians, some of them said he wrote it and some Christians, a minority, included it within their New Testament. But scholars are united today that Barnabas did not write this.

It's not. It's post-70 AD, probably 100, 120 AD. And it's not from Barnabas. First Clement is another one. This is a letter of Clement.

[ 37 : 47 ] I mentioned it earlier where Clement mentions Hebrews and Clement wrote around 95 AD. And Clement was a disciple of the apostles. He was a priest in Rome. He writes a letter to the Corinthians.

It's like a kind of a sequel to 1st and 2nd Corinthians. He writes a letter to them. And some Christians had his letter in their New Testament. They're like, you know, he was a disciple of the apostles.

Mark and Luke were disciples of the apostles. It's a pretty good letter too. I like it. It's a good thing though that it's not in the New Testament. And that's because it was not written with apostolic oversight.

It was written after the apostles had passed away. And by the way, Clement is not writing this as claiming it's scripture. He's just writing a letter to the Corinthians. And the Corinthians really liked it.

They, for instance, seemed to have read it in their church services publicly for decades afterwards. But there were a few other communities that included it in their New Testament, but most didn't.

[ 38 : 44 ] Shepherd of Hermas. This is a weird one, guys. It's a weird one. There's a scholar who talks about, there's a few churches who would read this publicly and there's a scholar who said that he pitied them, that they had to listen to this.

This is probably from the year like 150 AD. We still have it. You can read it. It's probably written around the year 150. For some reason, it really caught on in some churches.

And for instance, Irenaeus, whom, whom, let's see, do I have a church? Yeah. Irenaeus, he liked it. He quotes from it. He might have even included it in his Bible.

However, the Muratorian fragment and Tertullian both mention it and they both say, no, no, no, no, no. No, this is not part of the New Testament. And it eventually, it fell out.

Gospel of Hebrews. Yes, Gospel of Hebrews was included by some Christians. Don't let that alarm you. The Gospel of Hebrews seems to be just a Hebrew version of the Gospel of Matthew.

[ 39 : 46 ] Remember I said that Matthew was written for the Jews and it seems to be a Hebrew version of Matthew that for whatever reason had some changes here and there. So like the man with the withered hand, the story of Jesus healing the man with the withered hand, it gives his name, for instance, or at least tells his trade.

I can't remember if it's both. But little changes like that. So sometimes, so it seems to have been some version of Matthew, not all that different. The last one was the Diatessalon.

This was a huge account of Jesus' life. Some of the Eastern churches had this in their New Testament. But the Diatessalon, it means through four.

And what that was, was just the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, knit together into a single narrative. So instead of the four separated Gospels, they had this one Gospel where a man named Tatian took the four Gospels and put them all together.

So in a way, it's different from what we have today. But in another way, it's like really similar. It's not this far off, outlandish kind of thing that gives a completely different picture of Jesus.

[ 40 : 51 ] Does that make sense? Okay, so those were the books that, you know, some Christians considered as authoritative, others didn't. Here's another question. How long until the 27 Book New Testament was universally accepted?

How long did it take for the 27 Book New Testament to become universally accepted? Well, as I've showed, we do start having churches embracing a 27 Book New Testament very early on.

And even in the earlier stages, it may have happened. Remember, we can't be sure that this is the complete New Testament of these earlier churches represented by the Muratorian Fragment or Irenaeus or Tertullian.

We know that in 245, there were churches that seemed to have a 27 Book New Testament. There were many. But how long did this take to become universally accepted?

Well, the answer to this is complicated. And it depends on what area of the world, the Christian world you're talking about. So for instance, in Rome, the 27 Book New Testament seems to have been embraced very early on in the 200s.

[ 41 : 56 ] Same with Western Europe, same with Northwest Africa, same with Egypt. We don't know a lot about Cyprus, but we do have a list of New Testament books from the mid to late 300s.

It's 27 books. But then things are a little different in other parts of the world. In Asia Minor and in Palestine, we do have some evidence of 27 books, but we also have evidence that there were churches that were uncomfortable with the book of Revelation.

This is where we first start seeing that discomfort. And what's ironic is that earlier in the history of these churches, in the 100s and 200s, they did accept Revelation. But then it kind of fell under suspicion.

So those churches seem to have, I guess, what we'd call like a 26 book or 27 book New Testament. It depended what time you're talking about. Sometimes they had Revelation and sometimes they didn't.

Things get more diverse as we go farther east, especially when we start getting to the area of the Roman Empire that's overlapping with the Syriac church.

[ 43 : 03 ] Syriac is a language that was anciently spoken around here in what is today Iraq and Syria. They had what I guess I would call a smaller New Testament in that those books that I put up on the screen that said they were controversial like 2 John, 3 John, Jude, they excluded those from their New Testament originally.

And they did that for hundreds of years. In around 500 AD, they commissioned a new translation of the scriptures into Syriac that did have all 27 books.

And then in 600 AD, another translation into Syriac that also had all 27 books. But those translations didn't totally catch on for quite some time.

It took a very long time for all the Syriac churches to eventually embrace this 27 book New Testament. We could go to Armenia and Georgia.

They follow kind of a similar pattern, although they're more quick to get to the kind of 26 slash 27 book New Testament. Revelation took the longest here in Armenia and Georgia.

[ 44 : 11 ] We go farther into Ethiopia, into the Persian and Parthian Empire. And things start taking longer. And for instance, this church here took hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years to finally adopt a 27 book New Testament.

Interestingly, they were a great missionary church and they had a large mission in China. And we have an inscription from this mission in the 700s. And they do have a 27 book New Testament, it looks like.

But for some reason, this area took a very long time. So long that it took until basically the printing press for them to finally catch on to that.

And that may be true, that seems to be true in Georgia also, the country of Georgia which is up here. But eventually, they all came to agree on this. Okay.

So, I have another question. What about those heretics I hear about all the time? What about them?

[ 45 : 21 ] Well, that's a great question. Some of you hear about heretical early Christians that have a very different, they have other New Testament documents like the Gospel of Mary and the Gospel of Truth and the Gospel of Judas and the Gospel of Philip and the Gospel of so-and-so.

What about them? What if they're right? What if we're wrong? That's important for us to figure out. And so, what I want to do is I want to examine early Christian heretical sects to see what their New Testament contained and see if it had big differences and maybe and if those differences are important and if they are, are they right?

Are these other heretical Christian groups right and we're wrong? This is important to figure out. So, what we're going to do is we're going to examine some early Christian heretical sects to see what their New Testament contained and while we're doing that, we're also going to figure out on our own which writings we think come from an apostle because what if the early church was wrong?

What if they made a mistake? So, we're going to try and do this for ourselves. We're going to go through some heretical writings, look at them and then we're going to come up with the 27 or whatever number it is, books in a New Testament that come from an apostle.

So, let's do this. First thing to know about some, about early Christian heretics is that early Christian heretical sects, they made up a small minority of Christians.

[ 46 : 51 ] The majority of Christians in the early centuries followed the mainstream church and this church spanned thousands of miles, dozens of cultures, many languages and it was directly linked to the apostles.

So, there's good reasons why we want to trust those people instead of the other folks. But, let's, for sake of argument, let's just look at what the heretics believed about the New Testament and see what their New Testament looked like.

So, the most prevalent heretical sects in the ancient church were as follows. You have the Montanists who were largely in Asia Minor, the Novationists in Italy, the Donatists in northwest Africa and then the Arians who were all over but they were largely in Germany and in Egypt.

And when you look at these heretical groups, we have writings preserved from all of these and when you look at them and you try and see what their New Testament looked like, you'll discover that they accepted the very same New Testament that the mainstream church did.

Their debates with the mainstream church had nothing to do with what scriptures were accepted and had everything to do with how to interpret the scriptures. And in fact, several of these groups, the Montanists, the Novationists, and the Donatists actually had this same confession of faith.

[ 48 : 13 ] Their split from the church wasn't really even theological. It was more practical or praxis related. They didn't want to be, the Novationists and the Donatists didn't want to be associated with an official church in Rome and the Montanists had a very high regard for the current inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

They're like modern Pentecostals today, a very extreme form of Pentecostalism and the mainstream church thought they went too far but they're preaching the same core doctrines as the church.

Question? Cathars, when did they go? Oh, the Cathars, they're much later. They're like 1100, 1200. Yeah, they're much later. Unless, unless they're, some people argue there could be some kind of ancient link with the Donatists and the Novationists but they're much later.

So, okay, but what about those heretics that had a different New Testament? Well, the group that was the largest that had a different New Testament is called the Marcionites. They were founded by a man named Marcion around the year 140.

Their Bible was very different from our Bible and the reason why their Bible was very different was because they rejected every biblical writing that was Jewish and, if you think about it, that's almost everything.

[ 49 : 31 ] So, they rejected the entire Old Testament. They rejected almost the entire New Testament because these books were written by Jews and for Jews. The only books they accepted was the Gospel of Luke because Luke was a Gentile and they accepted most of the letters of Paul because even though Paul was Jewish, he was the apostle to the Gentiles.

But if you read Luke and you read Paul's letters, they're constantly quoting from the Old Testament in an approving way, so they had to go through and edit all those things out. So, these folks don't seem to be a particularly reliable group about what we should have in our Bible.

If we know anything about Jesus and the apostles at all, it was that they were Jewish and that they believed in the Jewish Old Testament. So, why would we trust a group that refuses to acknowledge one of the most fundamental facts of history concerning Jesus and the apostles?

But even worse than this is that the Marcionites also have an inherently contradictory view. They believed that the God of the Old Testament in their words, Yahweh, was evil, yet they worship Jesus whose name means Yahweh saves.

Yahweh is salvation. So, they're rejecting Yahweh while worshiping someone whose name confesses that Yahweh is salvation. So, totally contradictory group.

[ 50 : 52 ] So, I think we can safely dismiss the Marcionites from having some kind of more accurate Bible than we have today. There's another group that had a different Bible.

These are the Ebionites. This is a kind of Jewish Christian group and unlike the Marcionites, they rejected writings in the New Testament that were too pro-Gentile.

So, in other words, they didn't like Luke, they didn't, especially Paul. They did not like Paul at all. And so, what we see here with these two groups, the Marcionites and the Ebionites, is that these actually were kind of race-based groups.

They had this kind of, for lack of a better term, this sort of racist view of theology. The Marcionites rejected anything Jewish. The Ebionites rejected anything to do with Gentiles. And if we know the Old Testament, right in Genesis chapter 12, what does God say to Abraham?

That I will make your seed a blessing for all nations. And that promised seed is traced to the whole Old Testament, this promised seed for all nations, not just Jews. And that promised seed is Jesus.

[ 51 : 58 ] Jesus is the Savior of both Jews and Gentiles. So, they don't really seem to be a reliable guide either. But, what about those Gnostics we hear about?

That's the final group I'm going to mention. The Gnostics, they had all sorts of additional New Testament documents. They had things like the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Peter and the Gospel of Philip and Mary and Judas and Truth and the Acts of John and Paul and whoever.

And they had other documents with crazy names like Thunder, the Perfect Mind, which sounds kind of like a video game title. And they claimed that these were written by the apostles.

But, what's interesting is that the Gnostics acknowledged the New Testament of the mainstream church. They just added to it. So, they acknowledged the mainstream New Testament but then added these other documents.

So, what about these Gnostic documents? what if they're accurate? Like, what if they really are from the apostles? Well, we want to figure this out.

[ 53 : 09 ] We want to figure out if these other Gospels by Thomas and Philip and whoever really do come from the apostles and if we should trust them. Well, we can do this in a certain ways.

One thing we can try and do is we can try and verify the historical contents of these Gnostic Gospels to see if they're accurate, to see if they reflect history as it happened.

And when we do this, we see that we cannot verify the historical contents of these additional documents. Not only that, these documents seem totally disconnected from Judaism.

They have a whole lot more in common with Greek philosophy and Greek mythology and Greek culture and if there's anything we know about Jesus is that he was Jewish, he lived in first century Palestine, he was a rabbi, but these documents have little to no knowledge of that at all and that is in great contrast to the four Gospels which are embedded in Jewish culture and society in first century Israel.

On top of that, these Gnostic documents, they contain all sorts of ridiculous things. Like, one of them talks about this giant walking cross that comes out of Jesus' tomb and then starts talking to people.

[ 54 : 22 ] There's other documents that talk about the apostles resurrecting fish or taming bedbugs. One of them has Simon the Magician flying around in the air mocking Peter in some kind of glorified wizard's duel where people are paying money to watch like it's a sporting event.

I'm not exaggerating. It's crazy. And, in fact, this stuff totally lacks verisimilitude, historical veracity, authenticity.

It strains credulity. And all these factors point to the idea that these authors were not embedded in first century Jewish life. Instead, they're being influenced by later Greek philosophy and Greek mythological contours.

But this is not the case with the 27 documents of the New Testament. These are anchored in history. They're steeped in Jewish background. And we can verify this from many angles, which we will do next class, by the way.

But we have another reason for rejecting the Gnostic writings. And this is because none of them can be reliably dated to the first century. Every single one of them is most likely dated to the second or third centuries or later.

[ 55 : 29 ] None of them can be placed within a first century context. Every once in a while, you hear a scholar claim the Gospel of Thomas comes from the first century. But if you look at the evidence, there's really no evidence in favor of this.

There's a lot of evidence against it. But nevertheless, all 27 documents of the New Testament can be dated to the first century with great certainty or at least a great amount of plausibility.

And this gives us our final reason to reject the Gnostic writings. And it's that none of these Gnostic writings can be reliably attributed to apostolic authorship or apostolic oversight.

There is not a single scholar that I'm aware of who actually believes that the Gnostic writings come from the apostles. No one believes Thomas actually wrote Thomas or Judas actually wrote Judas or Mary actually wrote the Gospel of Mary.

And like I said, it's not just the early church that gives us evidence from this. Even the ancient heretics agree with this. Those heretical groups I showed you, the Donatists, the Novatians, they all rejected the Gnostic documents.

[ 56 : 35 ] And if that's not enough for you, even ancient non-Christian writers agree with this. There's an ancient philosopher, Porphyry. He's not a Christian.

He actually hated Christians. And he explicitly accuses the Gnostics of forging documents. But when he turns his attention to attack the mainstream church, he seems to acknowledge that their documents did come from the disciples of Jesus.

Now, Porphyry doesn't believe that the apostles are being truthful. He still rejects them, but he's totally fine, seemingly, accepting that they actually come from the disciples of Jesus. But for the Gnostics, he mentions how they were forging stuff and things like that.

So we have multiple avenues to verify this about these Gnostic documents that they do not actually come from the apostles. So let me summarize. None of the documents that come from the Gnostics can be historically verified.

None of them are connected with Judaism. None of them can be reliably dated to the first century. Many of them have ridiculous content. None of them can be reliably attributed to apostolic authorship or oversight.

[ 57 : 46 ] And even ancient heretics and non-Christian writers agreed on this matter. But the 27 books of the New Testament, they can be historically verified, which we'll see in two weeks when I'm with you again.

They can be reliably dated to the first century. They can be indexed back to an apostle. And they're the only documents in existence that can be linked to an apostle. And the ancient mainstream church, heretics, and even non-Christians agreed with this.

And these 27 books, it also matches the earliest complete New Testament list that we have from Origin of Alexandria in 245. It matches the earliest full-scale New Testament translation, the Old Latin, that was made sometime in the third century, maybe as early as 200.

And like I said, every church eventually chose to put these in their New Testaments. Most of them did so at a very early date. Some of them did so at a very late date. So if we were going to go and make our own New Testament that only had apostolic documents, we would choose the same 27 that we find in the New Testament today.

All right. But if you're like me, you might be wanting a bit more. You might be wanting more assurances, more guarantees. In fact, why stop with the apostles and their writings? I'll tell you what I really wish that we had in our New Testament.

[ 59 : 08 ] I would like to have a letter directly from Jesus himself delivered by the apostles. That's what I would like to have in my New Testament and I'd like to know why we don't have it in there.

Well, if you're wondering about this, then I invite you to read the New Testament for yourself and you'll find your answer. Paul writes to the Corinthians. He says, you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of the human heart.

So if you are looking for a letter by Jesus, we do have one. It's a letter from Jesus delivered by the apostles, but it's written on something better than paper and with something better than pen and ink.



It's written on your heart and it's written by the spirit. What a wonderful privilege and gift that this is. A few verses later, Paul explains something truly profound about this letter and the nature of this letter and the nature of the New Testament.

He writes this. He says, God has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit. That phrase, new covenant, in Greek, it's *kine diatheke*.

[ 60 : 24 ] That can be translated as New Testament, synonymous terms. God has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit.

Paul here is making a statement about the very nature of the New Testament. He's saying that it's not limited only to what is written in pen and ink.

It also includes what's written by the spirit. And all this points to the fact that the New Testament is more than just pen and ink and a bunch of words on paper. It's spiritual and of the spirit. And what this means is that for you to have a complete New Testament, you need more than just the pen and ink apostolic documents and letters.

You also need that spiritual letter of Jesus Christ written on the tablet of your heart. And if you're missing that letter, then you don't really have the whole New Testament.

But when you put that spiritual letter from Jesus together with the writings of the apostles, then you do have a complete New Testament. And these components are like self-authenticating witnesses that declare the truthfulness of one another.

[ 61 : 36 ] I remember when I was 18 years old and I was tangled up in my sins and Jesus caught me up and he cleaned me up and he wrote me up this living letter on my heart that just said, forgiven.

And then the remarkable thing for me was that for the first time in my life, the scriptures came alive for me. I'd been going to church every week for 18 years but once Jesus wrote that letter, then every word of scripture had this new and profound meaning for me.

And you know, this is similar to the way that the apostolic documents in our New Testament were independently gathered in various churches throughout history. People filled with the Spirit of God carrying that letter of Jesus in their hearts.

They met with these apostolic documents and those documents fit together with that letter of Jesus and each witness to one another. And the remarkable thing about this is that long ago Jeremiah the prophet foretold this in 600 BC.

He writes in Jeremiah 31, the days are coming declares the Lord when I will make a new covenant. We could also translate that New Testament with the house of Israel and the house of Judah not like the testament that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

[ 62 : 49 ] My testament that they broke though I was their husband declares the Lord. For this is the testament that I will make with the house of Israel after those days. I will put my law within them and I will write it on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

So Christians, this is how we are to read our New Testament. We're supposed to bring that letter that Jesus has written on our hearts and bring it together with those apostolic documents and let them minister to us and through us to other people.

Let's pause there. I'm going to pray real quick and then we'll have time for some Q&A.; Father in heaven, we thank you that you saw fit to assemble your New Testament for us. We thank you for your faithful apostles who wrote that and all the Christians who have preserved it and those who have taught it, some of whom we know.

And Lord, we ask that you would illuminate us as we read your word. You would guide us in your truth. You would help us to submit to it, to understand it, to preach it and teach it and to follow it, to be filled with joy, with love, with humility, with peace and gracefulness and thankfulness.

Lord, above all, we thank you for the forgiveness of sins that was wrought on the cross by your son Jesus. And we pray this in his mighty name. Amen. Okay, I went a little bit over but we do have time for Q&A.;

[ 64 : 05 ] If you do have to go, feel free. Otherwise, raise hands, ask questions. I'm happy to stick around. Yes, Ralph.

You use the phrase apostolic authorship or oversight. Yeah. Why do you have oversight? Great question. The question is, I mentioned apostolic documents or documents that have apostolic oversight and that's because there are documents in the New Testament that were not written by the immediate disciples of Jesus.

They were written by their contemporary disciples, the disciples of the disciples, so to speak. So documents like the Gospel of Mark, Gospel of Luke, Acts, because Luke wrote Acts.

And so, but those were not just written, you know, far after the fact, apart from the apostles. They seem to have apostolic supervision. So, for instance, there's good early historical evidence that when Mark wrote Mark, he was transcribing Peter's teachings, he was putting it down that Peter approved of this.

Same with Luke, is that there's evidence that Paul affirmed and approved Luke's ministry and the Gospel of Luke. So, that's why I said apostolic oversight.

[ 65 : 23 ] We do have some early Christian documents outside of the New Testament that were written by disciples of the apostles, but those were written much later.

They were not written under apostolic oversight. So, those are things like Clement of Rome writing in 95 AD, Ignatius of Antioch, he wrote seven letters around 105, 107, Polycarp of Smyrna, he wrote a letter at the same time.

Those were disciples of the disciples. They wrote letters, but they weren't written under apostolic oversight. I would say timing, but also, I think, they need to be associates of the apostles.

I mean, if we did find an early Christian document that came from like 45 AD, but it's just a person in the church, that wouldn't necessarily qualify. Okay. In Bauckham's book, it talks about, the Pius talks about, what you were just talking about, this oral tradition and oral history.

Can you elaborate on the difference? The difference between oral tradition, oral history. So, oral tradition. when Pope Pius was writing, he was getting it from the last two living people, but that before him it was oral history being handed down, like you said, from Mark.

[ 66 : 45 ] Yes, so, Raul's bringing up another early Christian writer named Papias, who, we don't have his books, they've been lost, except we do have some large quotations from his books that are found in other early Christian writers, and he seems to have known some of the disciples of Jesus and he records some things that he learned.

He talks about how Mark wrote Mark, for instance. He mentions Matthew, writing Matthew. This idea of oral tradition and oral history, there was, I mean, when you read the New Testament, Paul says to the churches, he says, be faithful to the traditions we handed down to you.

And by that, what he means is he's giving them the gospel message that Jesus gave to him. Jesus entrusted this to Paul. Paul is now entrusting it to others. And in the early church, it wasn't always written down.

Today, I believe, when we talk about apostolic tradition, what we're now talking about is the 27 book New Testament. But in the ancient church, before all these documents were written down, you know, you would have someone who knew the apostles tell you what's going on about the gospel, things like that.

And so, that's probably what they're getting at. This is not like a game of telephone. Sometimes you see a characterization of this where, you know, someone whispers something in someone's ear who whispers another ear and it just gets horribly distorted.

[ 68 : 11 ] This is a very public, open proclamation that is checked all the time. If you look at the ancient church, you know, Paul writes, is it to the Colossians or the Ephesians and he writes to them and he says, you know, make sure you read my letter from the church of Laodicea.

Make sure you read that and make sure you read this letter publicly in your church. He's telling them, you need to read this publicly. You need to distribute it and circulate it. And so, there was a lot of checks and balances going on.

It wasn't like a free for all, so to speak. Yeah. Yes? What about the Douay version? Don't they have that like Apocrypha or whatever it is?

Oh, so, the New Testament, the 27 book New Testament is the same in every single Christian church. The Old Testament is a little different.

So, the Old Testament, yes, yes. So, they call the Apocrypha or Catholic churches. What happens is that the Apocrypha is additional books of the Old Testament that are usually originally written in Greek, not Hebrew, and, or Aramaic.

[ 69 : 24 ] And, they were written, our Old Testament stops around 400 B.C. and these Apocryphal documents fill in that intermediate period between the end of the Hebrew, Aramaic, Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament.

The Malachi. Malachi. So, yeah, we have Malachi and then they have like 1st and 2nd Maccabees and things like that. And, you know, if you read 1st and 2nd Maccabees, they're good reads and I, I think God clearly was working amongst the Jewish people in the story of the Maccabees.

Remarkable, miraculous things are happening. I don't think Maccabees is inspired scripture but it doesn't mean that it's not talking about God's working in history, so to speak.

So, but, but that apocryphal section that the Catholics add, the Orthodox, the Eastern Orthodox, they also have it but it's a slightly different version and then you go to other ancient churches like the Ethiopian Orthodox Church or the Coptic Orthodox Church and they also have this apocryphal but again, they're all slightly different between themselves.

They don't agree on which ones are in there. This debate about whether to include these books, the early church had many debates about this and most of the, great scholars of the ancient church like Saint Jerome, he was the one who translated the Bible into Latin.

[ 70 : 47 ] He was very clear, he's like, I think it really should only be the Hebrew books that are included. The earliest Jewish lists of their Bible, the Old Testament, seem to not include the apocryphal books so I think the firmest ground is the, an Old Testament canon that is based on the Hebrew and Aramaic documents.

These also seem to be, that seems to reflect the Old Testament of the apostles and of Jesus also. But, that's a whole other, whole other bit.

Matt? Am I right in thinking that the Protestant Old Testament, what we use, is the same group of scriptures that Jews use today and we have used throughout history?

It's certainly the same one that if you go back to the very earliest Jewish lists, it seems to match up with the very earliest Jewish lists and it's part of the, when you get a Hebrew Bible today, it has the same books that we have.

They have them in a different order but it's the same, it's the same. Other questions? We have, we have gone well over time so feel free to go.

[ 72 : 05 ] Thank you so much. Amos? I've heard, I've heard some people say that they think there might be a total of four letters to the Corinthians. Yeah, there might have been. So what I'm wondering is, where are the, That's a great question.

I don't know how to phrase it but, so we know, there might have been more than 27 and maybe God just said, okay, yes, so, so, remember that the apostles clearly wrote more than the 27 books of the New Testament because they're going to be writing letters to one another, they're going to be signing tax receipts, I mean, they're going to be doing all sorts of stuff and when you read, and we know they did because when you read 1 Corinthians, Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians a previous letter he'd written to them and so we know there was something before 1 Corinthians.

He also seems to mention another one in 2 Corinthians maybe and so there's some theories that maybe there's actually two lost letters. He mentions an epistle to the Laodiceans in one of his letters that we don't have.

There are theories about that. Some people think that that letter is actually the letter to the Ephesians because Ephesians seems to be a circular letter that included Ephesus but was a larger number of cities than just Ephesus and that could have been the letter to the Laodiceans.

There is an ancient letter to the Laodiceans that you can go and look up and read. It's like a paragraph long. Most people don't think that's actually Paul's letter to the Laodiceans but as to like what do we do with that?

[ 73 : 37 ] Like what do we do with the idea that the apostles wrote other stuff and we don't have it? Well, the Old Testament is the same way. I mean the Old Testament will say go read this book and we don't have it.

It'll say go read the Wars of Yahweh or something or the Book of Jasher or something like that and those are lost to us and so practically there's really nothing we can do at this point.

It'll become a live issue if we find one of these documents. That will become like a really live issue of what do we do with this? I think though I don't think we're going to find a New Testament document and the reason why is because in the early church they didn't talk about documents that were from the apostles that we think actually were from the apostles that we no longer have.

They didn't there's nothing out there that they're like well that church was reading you know 3 Peter and we don't have this. That doesn't come up. I would think the closest that we could get to it is that Gospel of the Hebrews which seems to be the Hebrew version of Matthew and there's a debate we're missing we have quotations of this gospel but we don't have the whole thing and from the quotations it seems like it was basically the Gospel of Matthew but it had some additional information in it at certain points and the debate is is this from Matthew?

Did he write this and then translate his into Greek or what happened? And we know when you read the New Testament we know that the apostles just like any author just like any ancient author as well they did edit their documents they didn't just sit down do stream of consciousness and just send it I mean they went over it and you see this with Paul in Romans where his scribe just inserts a line from himself he says oh and I tertius who wrote this letter greet you which it's not Paul writing that it's the scribe or in the Gospel of John John is writing but then there's a couple points where it switches to third person where it says we know the disciple who wrote this and we know that what he says is true and what seems to be happening is that and we have early Christian evidence of this is that when John was writing he had some companions some of whom may have also been disciples of Jesus who he's writing this down and they then add this kind of little epilogue to it John almost certainly was there for that but this process of writing maybe something happened with the Gospel of Matthew like that too maybe Matthew is writing these things and maybe that's what the Gospel of Hebrews is that's the closest I think we could get to something that the apostles may have written and published that we somehow don't have anymore we might find it and realize actually all the quotations we have cover all the different stuff so we never really lost it we might find this is just some later

[ 76 : 37 ] Hebrew translation of the Greek that it's just a later Christian translation where someone added something in I don't know but that would be the only one if there's some amazing archaeological discovery in Corinth and they come up with four letters of the Apostle Paul I gotta say I would love that I think it'd be like the greatest thing ever I don't think we should be threatened by that I'd be so excited by that it'd be great the apostles they were sinners too I mean they clearly commit sins left and right throughout the New Testament they're not perfect so would these documents be part of the word of God we'd have to see I mean clearly not everything you know when Peter is writing a letter to his wife about something about groceries like we're not gonna expect that that's inspired by God so you know we just have to see what happens I think it'd be really cool all right thank you guys thank you so much thanks me you you you