

# **The Completion of the Bible**

Today, based on historical records, we shall consider how the Bible was completed, when it was written, and how its books were later recognized as canonical Scripture. Though these are merely historical facts, they bear close relevance to our Christian faith and spiritual life.

## **I. Before the Bible Was Written**

### **1. There Was No Written Revelation from God**

For the first twenty-five hundred years of human history, there was no written revelation from God. There was only God's spoken word given directly to patriarchs such as Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Book of Genesis shows that long before any Scripture was written, God appeared to these ancient fathers and gave them verbal instructions.

### **2. Oral Tradition Was Passed Down from Generation to Generation**

Before the Bible was recorded in writing, God's instructions were handed down orally from one generation of patriarchs to the next. This is confirmed by ancient stone tablets and monuments discovered in Egypt and Babylon.

In 1901, a black stone pillar was unearthed in Persia, inscribed with ancient laws resembling those of Moses—yet dating five to six hundred years earlier than Moses. This proves that long before Scripture was written, oral divine teachings already existed among mankind, passed down from their forefathers.

### **3. Ancient Languages and Writing Systems**

To understand how the Bible was written, we must first examine the ancient languages used in early civilizations.

### (1) Akkadian

No one knows what language mankind spoke before the flood. According to historical research, the earliest post-flood language originated from Akkad, northwest of ancient Babylon, known as Akkadian.

Names in Genesis such as Adam, Eden, and Sabbath appear to be Akkadian rather than purely Hebrew. Akkadian was originally linear script, later developing into cuneiform. This writing system remained in use until around 2000 B.C., roughly the time of Abraham.

### (2) Semitic Babylonian

From about 2000 B.C., Semitic Babylonian replaced Akkadian. Scholars believe this later became the root of Aramaic. This language continued until approximately 600 B.C., the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

### (3) Canaanite and Hebrew

Abraham originally dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees, a region of Babylon populated by Semitic peoples who used Semitic Babylonian. When God called Abraham to Canaan, historians generally agree he naturally abandoned his native tongue and adopted the local Canaanite language.

This Canaanite dialect later evolved into what we know as Hebrew. Many scholars regard the language of Canaan mentioned in Isaiah 19:18 as the dialect spoken by Israel in Canaan, from which classical Hebrew largely developed.

### (4) Aramaic

Around 600 B.C., the Israelites were exiled to Babylon. Living there for a long period, they gradually abandoned Hebrew and adopted Aramaic (also called Chaldean). Even after their return from exile, they continued using Aramaic until the time of the Lord Jesus.

Though Greek was common throughout the Roman Empire, everyday conversation among Jews remained Aramaic. Hebrew was reserved for synagogue

reading and rabbinic teaching; interpreters would render the Hebrew into Aramaic for those who could not understand.

Historians conclude that the Lord Jesus most likely spoke Aramaic in daily life. Phrases such as Talitha cumi (Mark 5:41) and Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani (Mark 15:34) are both Aramaic.

### (5) Greek

After the Roman Empire conquered the entire Mediterranean world, Greek culture spread everywhere, and Greek became the universal language of the Roman realm.

All these ancient languages are directly or indirectly related to the writing of the Bible.

## **II. The Languages Used in the Bible**

### **1. Hebrew**

The entire Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew.

### **2. Aramaic**

Four sections of the Old Testament are written in Aramaic:

Jeremiah 10:11

Daniel 2:4 - 7:28

Ezra 4:8 - 6:18

Ezra 7:12 - 26

These passages all relate closely to the Arameans (Babylonians), hence the switch from Hebrew to Aramaic.

### **3. Greek**

The entire New Testament was written in Greek. Only a few short phrases are Aramaic, such as those spoken by the Lord Jesus on earth and on the cross.

### **III. The Authors and Settings of the Bible**

#### **1. Old Testament Writers**

The Pentateuch (Genesis - Deuteronomy) - Written by Moses, educated in Pharaoh's court as a scholar, statesman, military leader, and prophet. Composed largely in the wilderness and at Mount Sinai.

Joshua - Written by Joshua, a military and political leader; partly on the plains of Moab and mostly in Canaan.

Judges - Authorship disputed; many scholars attribute it to Samuel.

Ruth - Closely linked in time and theme to Judges and 1 - 2 Samuel; also likely by Samuel.

1 & 2 Samuel - The first twenty-four chapters of 1 Samuel were written by Samuel. After his death (1 Samuel 25:1), the remainder was continued by the prophets Nathan and Gad. Originally one scroll in Hebrew; later divided into two by the Septuagint due to length.

1 & 2 Kings - Originally one scroll; authorship uncertain, often attributed to Jeremiah.

1 & 2 Chronicles - Also originally one scroll; widely ascribed to Ezra, whose writing style and vocabulary match perfectly with the final chapters of Chronicles and the opening of Ezra.

Ezra - Written by Ezra, a learned scribe, priest, and lawyer, composed in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah - Written by Nehemiah, governor of Judea under Persia, of the royal tribe of Judah; written in Jerusalem.

Esther - Authorship uncertain; possibly by Mordecai, written in Susa among the Gentiles.

Job - One of the most disputed books. Events predate Moses, possibly contemporary with Abraham around 2000 B.C. Suggested authors include Elihu or even Moses.

Psalms - At least 73 psalms explicitly by David, with nearly 100 attributed to him in total. Other authors include Asaph, Heman, Ethan, the sons of Korah, Solomon, and Moses. The sons of Korah are understood as descendants of the rebellious Korah in Numbers 16, who became deeply devout and humble before God.

Proverbs - Mostly by Solomon, with additional sayings by Agur and Lemuel.

Ecclesiastes & Song of Songs - Both written by Solomon.

The Prophetic Books (17 books) - Written by sixteen prophets. Jeremiah wrote both Jeremiah and Lamentations. Isaiah was a royal court prophet; Jeremiah a priest by birth; Ezekiel a prophet-priest written in Babylonian exile; Daniel of royal Judean descent written in Babylon and Elam; Amos a shepherd and fig-tree dresser with little formal education; Jonah likely wrote in Nineveh; Zephaniah of royal lineage; Zechariah a priest-prophet. The remaining eight prophets were mostly ordinary laymen.

Altogether, the Old Testament was penned by at least thirty-two authors, from every walk of life: kings, priests, prophets, shepherds, farmers, statesmen, soldiers, scholars, and common people, writing in palaces, wilderness, exile, and homeland.

## **2. New Testament Writers**

Matthew - Former tax collector, apostle; Gospel likely written in Judea.

Mark - Ordinary disciple; Gospel written probably in Rome.

Luke - Gentile physician; wrote Luke and Acts, composed among Gentile lands.

John - Galilean fisherman, apostle; wrote the Gospel, three Epistles, and Revelation, written mostly in Gentile regions including the island of Patmos.

Paul - Highly educated Jewish scholar, apostle to the Gentiles; authored fourteen epistles, many written in Roman imprisonment.

James - Half-brother of the Lord, pillar of the early church; Epistle likely written in Jerusalem.

1 & 2 Peter - Galilean fisherman, apostle; epistles written among Gentiles.

Jude - Half-brother of the Lord; Epistle possibly written in Judea.

The New Testament has eight authors. Only Paul and Luke received higher education; the rest were ordinary laymen with little formal schooling.

In total, the Bible was written by over forty authors—Jews and Gentiles, nobles and commoners, scholars and simple folk—writing in wilderness, palaces, islands, and prisons.

#### **IV. The Time Span of Bible Writing**

Old Testament: The Pentateuch was written around 1500 B.C.; the final book, Malachi, around 400 B.C. The entire Old Testament took about 1,100 years to complete.

New Testament: Matthew was written roughly A.D. 37 - 40; Revelation around A.D. 94 - 96. The New Testament was finished within fifty-some years.

From Genesis to Revelation, the total span of the Bible's composition covers approximately 1,500 - 1,600 years.

#### **V. The Recognition of Biblical Authority**

##### **1. The Old Testament**

###### **(1) The Pentateuch**

From ancient times, the Jews regarded the five books of Moses as divinely inspired, sacred, and authoritative, handed down from their forefathers. Even today, every synagogue keeps copies of the Pentateuch, even if lacking other Old Testament books. The Samaritans accept only the Pentateuch, further proving its ancient authority.

###### **(2) The Remaining Old Testament Books**

Other books gradually gained recognition by God's people through their inherent spiritual value and divine authority. As one writer wisely said: a tree needs no label; it is known by its growth, fruit, and nature. Likewise, canonical Scripture manifests its divine character through time and spiritual power.

Around 457 B.C., the scribe Ezra compiled the Pentateuch together with other universally acknowledged inspired books, forming the core of the Old Testament (excluding Nehemiah and Malachi, not yet written). Later, the Great Synagogue of scribes continued the canonization work, finalizing the Old Testament canon around 400 B.C.

The ancient Hebrew canon numbered twenty-four books, later counted as thirty-nine in Christian division. By 277 B.C., when the Septuagint translated the Old Testament into Greek, the canon was already fully settled.

## **2. The New Testament**

### **(1) The Gospels**

The early church read the Gospels alongside the Old Testament from the beginning; the four Gospels were the first New Testament books universally recognized.

### **(2) The Remaining New Testament Books**

After the apostles passed away, spurious works appeared, prompting early church fathers to collect and authenticate genuine apostolic writings. By the time of Polycarp's martyrdom, most churches shared the same New Testament canon.

Seven books remained disputed for a time: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. Yet their divine inspiration and spiritual authority eventually prevailed.

At the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397, church leaders formally recognized these seven books, confirming the New Testament as twenty-seven books, exactly as we have today. By this date, the entire Old and New Testament canon was fully

recognized and settled among God' s people.

## **VI. The Order and Division of the Biblical Books**

### **1. The Old Testament**

The modern order follows the Septuagint, which rearranged the books when translating into Greek around 277 B.C. The original Hebrew Old Testament was divided into three parts, as the Lord referenced in Luke 24:44:

The Law of Moses – 5 books (Pentateuch).

The Prophets – 8 books: Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) and Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets counted as one).

The Writings – 11 books including Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra – Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

Total: 24 books in the ancient Hebrew canon. Early Christians sometimes counted 22 books, matching the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Many original Hebrew book titles were taken from the opening words or the meaning of the main character' s name; the modern titles were established by the Septuagint.

### **2. The New Testament**

From the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397 onward, the twenty-seven books and their order have remained unchanged to the present day.

## **VII. The Apocrypha**

### **1. Not Originally Included in the Canon**

The Apocrypha consists of fourteen books, not part of the original biblical canon. The claim that they were included in the Septuagint from 277 B.C. is historically inaccurate.

Testimony of Josephus (A.D. 37): He stated the Jews recognized only 22 sacred

books, with nothing added, removed, or altered for centuries—proving the Apocrypha were not included in his time.

Testimony of Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 315): He affirmed the ancient 22-book Old Testament translated by the Seventy (or Seventy-two) translators, with no Apocrypha present.

Testimony of the Lord Jesus and the Apostles: They frequently quoted the Old Testament yet never once cited the Apocrypha, confirming these books were not regarded as Scripture in their day.

## **2. Later Added in the Vatican Manuscript**

One of the oldest complete Bible manuscripts, the Vatican Codex (4th century A.D.), contains the fourteen Apocryphal books inserted into the Septuagint text—added sometime after A.D. 315.

The Eastern Orthodox Church formally rejected the Apocrypha at the Council of Laodicea in A.D. 363, forbidding their use in worship, showing their canonicity was still highly disputed at that time.

## **3. Official Acceptance by Roman Catholicism**

It was not until the Council of Trent in A.D. 1546 that the Roman Catholic Church officially declared the fourteen Apocryphal books canonical and authoritative. From then on, Catholic Bibles included the Apocrypha.

Protestant reformers and the Westminster Confession (1646) explicitly rejected the Apocrypha as uninspired, possessing no divine authority beyond ordinary human writings.

## **Conclusion**

The true canonical Bible consists only of the 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament books we possess today. The fourteen Apocryphal books were arbitrarily added by Roman Catholicism, filled with legendary and fanciful tales, with unknown

authors, dates, and origins—bearing no sacred canonical value whatsoever.