

HOW DID WE GET THIS AUTHORITATIVE BOOK? (1 Corinthians 14:37)

I. The book was first in containers.

- A. You might be thinking that you remember hearing that some scrolls with books of the Bible written on them were found in some jars and containers.
 - 1. You would probably be thinking about the Dead Sea Scrolls that were discovered in 1947 in a cave near the Dead Sea.
 - 2. A shepherd boy was throwing rocks and heard something break and found numerous containers full of many scrolls containing much of, if not all, the Old Testament.
- B. This find was extremely important and validated the Old Testament as being complete and properly translated.
- C. However, those aren't the containers to which I'm referring.
- D. Notice what Paul said about himself and the other apostles and probably inspired writers also (2 Corinthians 4:6-7).
 - 1. Paul, by inspiration, stated that the treasure of the gospel was in earthen vessels or containers.
 - 2. Those inspired writers and preachers of the first century were the earthen vessels in which God had placed His word.
 - 3. This, of course, is the process of inspiration and revelation, about which we spoke last week.
- E. The process was the same for the Old Testament.
 - 1. We showed last week that over 400 times we literally have a "thus saith the Lord" from the pens of the inspired prophets and writers of the Old Testament.
 - 2. It is graphically illustrated by David (2 Samuel 23:2).
- F. Those men that preached in the 1st century were walking, talking New Testaments.
- G. When they preached or taught, they were doing so by inspiration.
- H. However, they wrote these things down and considered their works and that of other inspired men to be authoritative.
 - 1. Paul quoted from Luke (1 Timothy 5:18; Luke 10:7).
 - 2. Peter said that the works of the apostles were on the same level as those of the prophets (2 Peter 3:1-2).
 - 3. Peter said specifically that Paul's writing was equal to that of the prophets by calling it scripture (2 Peter 3:14-16).
- I. So we see that the Bible came to us in containers first.

II. The Bible was canonized.

- A. The type of canon about which I'm speaking is not the type that is used in war.
- B. The word canon means list or index.

1. It came from a word that means reed.
 - a. These reeds grew along the Nile River.
 - b. They were very straight and sturdy and used to measure things.
 2. Paul used the Greek word in Philippians 3:16 where it is translated rule.
- C. It carries the idea, when applied to the books found in the Bible, that they have measured up and are able to be indexed or listed as scripture.
- D. The books that we have in our Bibles today have measured up to the criterion that makes for books to be considered inspired.
1. There had to be marks of inspiration.
 2. The books could not contradict other books or make claims that were known to be false.
 3. These and other criteria had to be met to be considered inspired.
- E. There are two canons of course.
1. The Old Testament canon;
 2. And the New Testament Canon.
- F. The Old Testament Canon came about a long time ago.
1. The Jews were very careful to preserve the teaching of Moses, the prophets and other inspired writers of the Old Testament.
 2. It is believed that Ezra was the main one responsible for the Old Testament Canon.
 3. Even during the intertestamental period, the 39 books we have in the Old Testament, were considered the 39 books.
 4. In fact, there were only 22 with many of the books on the same scroll.
 - a. For instance, there is no 1 & 2 Kings or 1 & 2 Chronicles.
 - b. Both sets were one book but too big to be placed on one scroll, thus the division we have.
 - c. Other examples like that exist.
 5. Jesus attested to the canon of the Old Testament numerous times by quoting from many of the prophets, Psalms, and Moses.
 6. He put His stamp of approval on the canon of the Old Testament in a statement recorded at the end of Luke's gospel account (Luke 24:44).
- G. How we got the New Testament canon is similar.
1. The letters written by the inspired men, those earthen containers, were circulated between congregations (Colossians 4:16).
 2. Through time, these letters were copied, and each congregation would keep a copy of them, until most congregations had all of them.
 3. There is more to it, because during the late 1st century and from then on, there were letters written by men who were not inspired.
 - a. Some of these claimed inspiration, others did not and just

- wrote to exhort their brethren.
- b. Sometimes, these letters were mingled in with the inspired works and were taken as part of scripture when they should not have been.
4. Because of this, there was much study done by many brethren to determine which books were inspired and which were not.
 - a. Of course, some were easily seen as being uninspired, others not so.
 - b. Also, because of the different style of Revelation and Jude, these were disputed for many years.
 5. We could go into great detail about the different brethren who studied this topic but the consensus by the close of the 300's was that the 27 books we have today were the only inspired books and the only ones to be followed.
 - a. Eusebius, known as the father of church history, wrote a list of books and classified them in four categories.
 - (1) Homologumena - Acknowledged books, which included all the books but James, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, and Jude.
 - (2) Antilogumena - Disputed books, which included all those we just mentioned.
 - (3) Apocrypha - Spurious book, which were books that had many scriptural things but were not inspired because the marks of inspiration were not there.
 - (4) Pseudepigrapha - Absurd or impious books that were written by heretics in the name of apostles.
 - b. Other men besides Eusebius listed these same books.
 6. As you can see, this was not some overnight process undertaken by a council.
 7. This was a process that was painstaking because the brethren then understood the consequences of accepting something that was uninspired or rejecting something that was inspired.
 8. There were councils that met later in the 4th century and nearly all of them agreed with canon that had been developed and which we now have today.
- H. These things show us that there is no question about the books we have today being the books God intended for us to have (2 Peter 1:3).

III. The Bible was copied.

- A. Have you ever wondered if the Bible from which you read contains the words that the inspired men wrote down?
- B. If you have, again, you aren't alone.
 1. There is whole realm of studies called criticism.
 2. There are different forms of it, but all study how we got our Bibles

- today.
3. Some are trying to destroy man's faith in the Bible or at least to get us to reject the idea of true inspiration or anything miraculous.
 4. However, there is a lot of material and study done to confirm that what we have is true to the original writings of inspired men.
- C. There are new things all the time coming up about this.
1. Just this week I read an article about a copy of some of the book of Mark that was found in Egypt.
 2. When people were buried in Egypt, many would have masks made for them in which to be buried.
 3. The rulers and wealthy had theirs made of precious metals and jewels.
 4. Those not so affluent would have theirs made of paper and then painted over to represent them how they wanted.
 5. The paper that was used was papyrus and many times it was being what we would call recycled.
 6. The paper was written on and then used to make a mask.
 7. Scientists have developed a process to unglue the masks that have been found in order to read the text on the papyrus.
 8. Works of Homer and other writers have been found.
 9. Personal letters have been found as well.
 10. Within the last couple of years and only recently made known, a mask was unglued that had a part of the book of Mark in it.
 11. What is great about it is that, based on the other papers used in this mask, it seems that this copy of Mark dates from the late 1st century.
- D. Finds such as this allow those engaged in criticism to compare that early text to what we have today.
- E. In reality, the Lord's church has had two main issues with which to deal over the last 2,000 years:
1. Preserving God's inerrant word for future generations;
 2. Applying that truth that is preserved to mankind.
- F. Truth makes us free when it becomes known (John 8:31-32) and if it were to be lost, men could not be saved.
- G. I want to quote from a book that deals with this very idea:
1. There are four links in the chain from God to us: inspiration, canonization, transmission, and translation. In the first, God gave the message to the prophets who received and recorded it. Canonization, the second link, dealt with the recognition and collection of the prophetic writings. In effect, the objective disclosure was complete when the sixty-six books of the Bible were written, and then recognized by their original readers. However, in order for succeeding generations to share in this revelation the scriptures had to be copied, translated, recopied, and retranslated.

This process not only provided the scriptures for other nations, but for the other generations as well.”

2. In other words, this book at to be preserved and copied for us to have truth.
- H. We need to understand that God always intended for His words to be preserved.
- I. The only way this could be accomplished is through the providential working of God through people concerned with proper care for and transmission of that word.
- J. Notice some scriptures that point to God’s promise to preserve His word:
1. 2 Kings 10:10.
 2. Psalm 12:6-7.
 3. Psalm 33:11.
 4. Isaiah 40:8.
 5. Matthew 24:35.
- K. God always intended to preserve His word (Psalm 119:86).
1. Why would God speak to man but not have a plan for man to remember what was spoken?
 2. 1 Corinthians 13:10 points to the written word as the perfect medium for preserving truth.
- L. God’s faithful people have always preserved His words.
1. The priests kept the words of God, even the prophets they killed, very faithfully.
 2. Today, there are over 6,000 texts of the New Testament dating from very early on in the history of the church to ensure that what we have is God’s word that He intends for us to have and follow.
- M. Are there some passages that have been called into question?
1. Yes there are.
 2. However, the questions have been answered by further study of the original texts and new discoveries.
- N. Are there some poor or even misleading translations?
1. Absolutely!!
 2. We need to be aware of them.
 3. We can trust the Bible so long as the version we are reading has been faithfully and carefully translated and brought into use.
 4. Sadly, there are groups that have translated the Bible with their own biases.
 5. There are those who have mistranslated passages because of their doctrinal biases.
 6. We need to be aware of that when we purchase a Bible or download a Bible to our persona devices.

The outline is original but much of the material came from Keith Mosher’s books “The Book God Breathed, Vol.’s 1 & 2”.