



Part 5 - August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

“Is the Canon of Scripture Closed?  
Is God Still Giving Inspired Revelation Today?”

Let me answer a question as a follow-up to last Sunday before we move on. Why are the books of the Apocrypha not found in our Bible?

How many of you have heard of the Apocryphal books? The Apocryphal books are a group of 14 - 15 books that aren't in our Bible. 7 of these are found in the Catholic Bible and are considered by the Catholic Church to be inspired by God – just like the other books of the Bible.

But let me give you some reasons why we don't believe the Apocryphal books are inspired and shouldn't be included in the canon of Scripture...

(NOTES) Why Are the Books of the Apocrypha Not in Our Bible?

1. They were written in the time between the Old and New Testaments (400 B.C. – the first century) – a time called the “The 400 Silent Years” - when there were no prophets speaking for God. They are therefore not considered “inspired” Scripture.

2. The Jews respected these books but didn't accept them as Scripture for the reason above, thus they are not in the Jewish Old Testament.
3. The early church fathers (those who came immediately after the apostles who were God's recognized messengers) didn't accept them.
4. The New Testament quotes hundreds of times from the Old Testament, but nowhere quotes or alludes to any of the Apocryphal books.
5. The Apocryphal books contain no claim to be divine Scripture and they contain historical errors, contradictions, and false teaching contrary to the rest of the canon of Scripture including:
  - Prayers for the dead
  - Petitioning "saints" in heaven for their prayers (e.g. Mary)
  - Worshiping angels
  - "Alms giving" atoning for sins (salvation by good works not by faith)

So those are some reasons why we don't recognize the Apocryphal books as being inspired by God and therefore they are not included in our Bible.

Now let's get to the next question: "Is the Canon of Scripture Closed? Is God Still Giving Inspired Revelation Today?"

The Bible has included the 66 books that we have today for over 1600 years now. No new revelation has been added in that time – and there’s a reason for that.

In the last book of the Bible – Revelation – in the last chapter of the last book – chapter 22 – in the last few verses – we read the most solemn and frightening warning ever given by God to the human race (READ Rev. 22:18-19).

These verses are our memory verses this week, let’s say them together out loud...

(Slide)

*“I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to them, 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 will take away his share of the tree of life and the holy city, which are written about in this book.”*

Revelation 22:18-19

What does John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, say here in vs. 19, will happen to anyone who adds to the Bible? The plagues described in the book of Revelation will fall on that person.

All the prophecies regarding the doom of sinners and on everyone who refuses to place their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation will come true on anyone who intentionally manipulates the Bible by adding anything to it.

Such a person will incur the wrath of God. You mess with God's Word – the only source of truth for mankind - you're messing with God Himself, and that person will pay the price for it.

And what does God through the Apostle John say will happen to anyone who takes away from the Bible - in verse 19? That person has no hope of eternal life in heaven.

If anyone falsifies God's Word by taking part of it out, that also changes God's Word, and that person also invites God's special intervention in their lives, they will never see or experience the blessings of heaven.

These warnings of adding to or taking away from God's Word not only applies to the book of Revelation, it applies to the entire Bible itself – all 66 books.

The canon of Scripture was closed at the end of the first century with the book of Revelation which details the coming future judgments on the world and on sinners, and the coming eternal state for all true followers of Jesus Christ.

For almost 2,000 years now the church and her leaders have considered the canon of Scripture closed forever based on God's warnings in the book of Revelation and the following facts...

**NOTES:**

1. When the Apostle John, the last living Apostle, recorded The Revelation in writing at the end of the first century, his death soon afterward ended the Apostolic era. No other authorized prophets or apostles with Old or New Testament credentials have since arisen, meaning God has ceased giving inspired revelation.
2. There are 4 warnings in the Bible about tampering with Scripture (Deut. 4:2; Deut. 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6), only this final one in Revelation 22 contains warnings of severe divine judgment for disobedience, strongly suggesting that Revelation was the last book of the canon and that the Bible is complete forever.
3. Church history shows that the early church, those believers closest in time to the apostles who walked with Jesus and saw him before and after His death and resurrection, believed that Revelation concluded God's inspired writings.

Have people ignored these warnings here in Revelation and tried to change Scripture? There's too many to count. But one of the most notable one is this one... The Jefferson Bible.

Thomas Jefferson served as our nation's third president. Jefferson bought into the ideology of what history calls the Age of Enlightenment – a period when human reason was thought to be the highest ideal.

His worldview didn't reject Jesus Christ, but it did emasculate Jesus' divine nature. Jefferson and others like him couldn't accept miracles – even those done by someone who actually was God as Jesus is.

This worldview is called Deism. Deism believes that God created the universe but once He did that and started everything in motion, since then God has a “hands-off” approach to everything and mankind is left to our own human reason to figure things out.

So Jefferson set out to create a new Bible – one of his liking. He took scissors and penknife and literally cut and pasted passages of the Bible out and rearranged others – taking out miracles and anything that depended on God and His power and when he finished he called it, “The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth.”

No one but Jefferson and one of his daughters knew about his own private little Bible for decades. Jefferson's great-granddaughter sold it to the Smithsonian Institute in 1895. And that's what you see on the slide.

What is the Bible if you take out the divine nature of Jesus, his miracles, His resurrection? It changes everything about the gospel, about salvation, it casts doubt on everything Jesus said and taught. It does exactly what God warned against doing under penalty of divine judgement.

So, is the canon of Scripture closed? Yes it is. Is God still giving inspired revelation today? No. Everything God desired to say to us about our past, our present and our future has been said, there's nothing else left to say.

These answers are so vitally important to know because false teachers come on the scene all the time. False religions rise up and they will continue to rise up until Christ comes back.

If another Joseph Smith comes on the scene and claims that God spoke to him through an angel and he wrote down what the angel said and called it The Book of Mormon... in some fashion if that happens again, and it will...

If you're not convinced of the completeness of the Word of God you may be led astray into false doctrines and teachings that contradict the Bible and the gospel and be led astray like those in the Mormon Church cult.

One more question: Does God still speak today? Yes He does. Every time you sit down and read and study the Bible God is speaking to you by His Spirit through the Word.

Every time you spend time with God in prayer, not only are you talking to God but it is in those times when the Spirit of God speaks to your heart also and impresses your heart and mind with His leading.

God speaks to us by His Spirit through the church – through fellow believers who speak His truth into your life – like I'm doing right now, like a brother or sister might do when they are reminding you of what God has said in His Word.

God speaks to us by His Spirit through the circumstances which He uses to guide us, to use us, and to shape us into the image of His Jesus. God still speaks to us every day if we'll take the time to listen as He moves in our hearts and minds by His Holy Spirit.

And what God says to us by His Holy Spirit will ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS be consistent with His inspired Word, the Bible. God will NEVER lead you contrary to what He has already revealed in the Bible.

So since reading and studying the Bible is so important in hearing from God, how confident are you in your ability to study the Bible? This Wednesday I'm going to talk about that in our zoom study...

(Slide) "How to Get the Most Out of God's Word" Zoom Study – send me an email if you haven't joined us before and would like to:

[rjones@fellowshipnorwali.org](mailto:rjones@fellowshipnorwali.org).

We're going to talk about how to study the Bible. If you want to get an early study in thinking and learning more about this, last month with our study notes, I included an article entitled, "What are the Basics of Bible Study?".

This is included in the notes at the tower in the lobby. (ONLINE: I'll email it to you).