

# Are the Right Books in the Bible?

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# The Books of the Bible

- The standard list of books in the Protestant Christian Bible contains 66 items.
- Catholics and Eastern Orthodox have a few more books in the Old Testament, but the same as Protestants for the New Testament.
- Various other groups (Mormons, theological liberals, etc.) would like to add or subtract some books.

# The Books of the Bible

- We're not going to solve all the possible questions in this talk, but we will address the main ones.
- Let's consider:
  - How do we know the right books are in the Bible?
  - How did these books come to be in the Bible?

# How Do We Know?



# How do we know anything?

- Philosophers define knowledge as “warranted true belief.”
- That is:
  - (1) We believe something to be true.
  - (2) We have good reasons for this belief.
  - (3) We are in fact correct.
- As a philosopher-friend of my has noted:
  - (1) is something we can be quite sure of.
  - (2) we can feel rather certain about, but...
  - (3) only God knows for sure.

# How do we know anything?

- So humans can know things, but (unlike God) we cannot know that we know.
- Yet God has given us certain tools by which we can know:
  - Experience: using our own resources
  - Authority: depending on others
- Both of these are important for most types of knowledge.

# How do we know we have the right books?

- We can divide up this question into several sub-questions.
  - How do we know God has revealed Himself in the Bible?
  - What does God tell us about Himself?
  - What does God tell us about the Old Testament?
  - What does God tell us about the New Testament?

# How do we know God has revealed Himself in the Bible?

- This is answered by the evidence God has provided for us.
- We study this in courses and books on “Christian Evidences.”
- I divide this topic into three parts:
  - Evidence from General Revelation
  - Evidence from Special Revelation
  - Evidence from Redemption



# Evidence from General Revelation

- External General Revelation is God's evidence provided for His existence & character out in nature.
  - I have several PP talks on this material.
- Internal General Revelation is God's evidence for His existence & character within us, in our logical, moral & esthetic capacities.
  - See my PP talk “Evidence of God in Cosmos & Conscience.”

# Evidence from Special Revelation

- This is evidence God provides about Himself in the Bible. I include evidence from:
  - Preknowledge of Science
  - Fulfilled Prophecy
  - Jesus
- We have several PP talks on the latter two categories. See my “Astronomy in the Bible” for an example of the first category.

# Evidence from Redemption

- God provides evidence for Himself in the changed lives of His followers.
  - Christian bookstores & magazines are filled with testimonies of this sort.
- God provides evidence for Himself in societies which have been changed by His revelation and redeeming work.
  - There are several books on this, e.g., *How the Irish Saved Civilization, Under the Influence*.

# Summary

- From evidences such as these, I conclude:
  - There is a God.
  - He is the God of the Bible, who:
    - Created the universe
    - Controls history
    - Caused the Bible to be written as His revelation
    - Transforms people who trust Him with their lives and their eternal destiny.

# What does God tell us about Himself?

- He tells us lots of things about Himself.
- But for our purposes here, He tells us about:
  - His intention to communicate with humans.
  - His ability to carry out His intentions.
- Let's look at some Bible passages that deal with these matters.

# His Intention to Communicate

Genesis 12:1 (NIV) The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. 2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." 4 So Abram left, as the LORD had told him...

# His Intention to Communicate

Exodus 3:1 (NIV) Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight why the bush does not burn up." 4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." 5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

# His Intention to Communicate

John 1:1 (NIV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. 6 There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.



# His Ability to Carry Out His Intentions

Exodus 4:10 (NIV) Moses said to the LORD, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." 11 The LORD said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? 12 Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."

# His Ability to Carry Out His Intentions

Psalm 19:7 (NIV) The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.

# What does God tell us about the Old Testament?

- He tells us it was given by revelation and/or inspiration through His prophets.
- He gives us tests for recognizing a true prophet.
- He gives warnings about tampering with His revelation.
- Jesus accepted the Old Testament as God's word.

# Given by Revelation or Inspiration

Exodus 4:10 (NIV) Moses said to the LORD, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." 11 The LORD said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? 12 Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."

# Given by Revelation or Inspiration

Deuteronomy 18:17 (NIV) The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.

# Given by Revelation or Inspiration

Psalm 119:97 (NIV) Oh, how I love your law!  
I meditate on it all day long.

98 Your commands make me wiser than my  
enemies, for they are ever with me.

99 I have more insight than all my teachers,  
for I meditate on your statutes.

100 I have more understanding than the  
elders, for I obey your precepts.

# Tests for a Prophet

Deuteronomy 13:1 (NIV) If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, 2 and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," 3 you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. 5 That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the LORD your God...

# Tests for a Prophet

Deuteronomy 18:20 (NIV) But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death." 21 You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" 22 If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.



# Warnings about Tampering

Deuteronomy 4:1 (NIV) Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. 2 Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.

# Warnings about Tampering

Proverbs 30:5 (NIV) "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

6 Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.

# Jesus Accepted the OT

- In his temptation in the wilderness, he responded to Satan by using the OT.
  - Matt 4:4 (NIV) Jesus answered, "It is written: `Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'[Deut. 8:3]"
  - Matt 4:7 (NIV) Jesus answered him, "It is also written: `Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'[Deut. 6:16]"
  - Matt 4:10 (NIV) Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: `Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'[Deut. 6:13]"

# Jesus Accepted the OT

Matthew 5:17 (NIV) Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

# Jesus Accepted the OT

Matthew 12:38 (NIV) Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you." ... 41

"The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. 42 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here."

# Jesus Accepted the OT

Luke 24:25 (NIV) He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ [Messiah] have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

# What does God tell us about the New Testament?

- Jesus appointed apostles (messengers, commissioners) to tell others about what He had come to do.
- The Old Testament example has implications for the New Testament.

# Jesus Appointed Apostles

Mark 3:13 (NIV) Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. 14 He appointed twelve designating them apostles that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons.



# Jesus Appointed Apostles

John 14:24 (NIV) He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. 25 "All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

# Jesus Appointed Apostles

John 16:12 (NIV) I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

# OT Implications

- The ministry of Jesus is the fulfillment of significant OT prophecies about the Messiah.
  - Jesus is the one like Moses (Deut 18:17).
  - He is David's greater Son (Ps 110:1).
  - He is Isaiah's suffering Servant (Isa 53).
  - He is Daniel's Son of Man (Dan 7:13).

# One Like Moses

- Deuteronomy 18:15 (NIV) The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. 16 For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die."
- No one since Moses had done miracles like Jesus did.

# David's Greater Son

- Psalm 110:1 (NIV) The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."
- Matt 22:41 (NIV) While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 "What do you think about the Christ [Messiah]? Whose son is he?" "The son of David," they replied. 43 He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'? For he says, 44 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'" ' 45 If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?"

# Isaiah's Suffering Servant

Isaiah 53:3 (NIV) He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

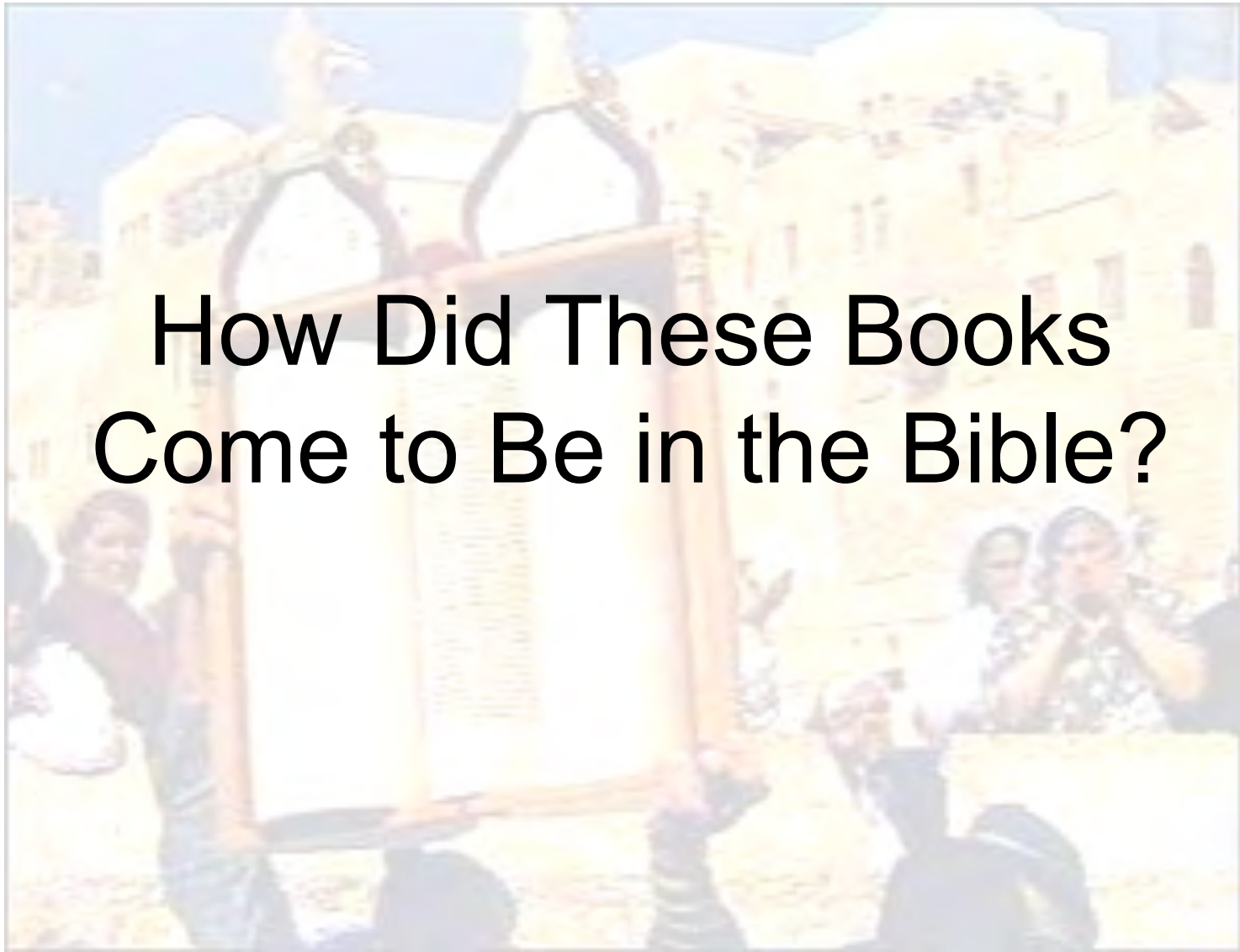
# Daniel's Son of Man

Daniel 7:13 (NIV) In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

# OT Implications

- So, as the NT completes the OT, it should not be surprising that the selection of books in the NT should parallel that of the selection of books in the OT:
  - The OT by God's OT covenant people
  - The NT by God's NT covenant people
- This appears to be what happened.





# How Did These Books Come to Be in the Bible?

# Process of OT Recognition

- The first five books (Pentateuch) were recognized as from God when first written.
- The various prophets were recognized as from God at or soon after their ministry.
- We don't know details on all the books.
- A consensus was reached before the time of Christ.

# Pentateuch Recognized

Deuteronomy 31:24 (NIV) After Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law from beginning to end, 25 he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD: 26 "Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God. There it will remain as a witness against you."

# Prophets Recognized

1 Kings 22:24 (NIV) Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. "Which way did the spirit from [or Spirit of] the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?" he asked. 25 Micaiah replied, "You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room." 26 The king of Israel then ordered, "Take Micaiah and send him back to Amon the ruler of the city and to Joash the king's son 27 and say, `This is what the king says: Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely.'" 28 Micaiah declared, "If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!"

# Prophets Recognized

Jeremiah 28:12 (NIV) Shortly after the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: 13 "Go and tell Hananiah, `This is what the LORD says: You have broken a wooden yoke, but in its place you will get a yoke of iron. 14 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will put an iron yoke on the necks of all these nations to make them serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they will serve him. I will even give him control over the wild animals.'" 15 Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, "Listen, Hananiah! The LORD has not sent you, yet you have persuaded this nation to trust in lies. 16 Therefore, this is what the LORD says: `I am about to remove you from the face of the earth. This very year you are going to die, because you have preached rebellion against the LORD.'" 17 In the seventh month of that same year, Hananiah the prophet died.

# Prophets Recognized

Ezekiel 2:3 (NIV) He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. 4 The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' 5 And whether they listen or fail to listen for they are a rebellious house they will know that a prophet has been among them.

# Consensus Reached

- By the time of Jesus, it is clear that a consensus has been reached within main-stream Judaism on the books in what we call the Old Testament:
  - Ben Sirach
  - Josephus
  - New Testament
  - Rabbis
- For more details on this, see my article “The Council of Jamnia & the OT Canon” in the *Westminster Theological Journal* (Spr 1976).
  - Also available on our IBRI website [www.ibri.org](http://www.ibri.org).

# Process of NT Recognition

- NT writers recognized NT as Scripture.
- The Apostolic Fathers recognized the NT as Scripture.
- A consensus was reached in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, within a century of the end of the Roman persecution of Christians.



# NT Writers Recognize

2 Peter 3:15 (NIV) Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

# NT Writers Recognize

1 Timothy 5:17 (NIV) The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," [Deut. 25:4] and "The worker deserves his wages." [Luke 10:7]

# NT Writers Recognize

- Jude 1:17 (NIV) But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. 18 They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.”
- Jude is apparently quoting 2 Peter 3:3:
  - 2 Pet 3:1 (NIV) Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. 2 I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. 3 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.

# Apostolic Fathers Recognize

- Take up the epistle of the blessed Paul the Apostle. What wrote he first unto you in the beginning of the Gospel? Of a truth he charged in the Spirit concerning himself and Cephas and Apollos, because that even then you made factions.  
– Clement 47
- Clement, writing to the Corinthian church, makes reference to Paul's letter, First Corinthians.

# Apostolic Fathers Recognize

- For I am persuaded that you are well-trained in the sacred writings, and nothing is hidden from you. But to myself this is not granted, only, as it is said in these scriptures, “Be ye angry and sin not,” and “Let not the sun set on your wrath.”
- Polycarp, Philipppians 12, quotes Eph 4:26 as included in “sacred writings” and “these scriptures.”

# Apostolic Fathers Recognize

- Pseudo-Barnabas is very allegorical work, written about AD 135.
- In Ps-Barn 4, as part of an exhortation, the author quotes Matthew 22:14 “*many called, but few chosen,*” under the heading, “*As it is written.*”

# Consensus Reached

- By the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century (before 200), the four Gospels are universally recognized, and no others.
- By 230, Origen lists two categories:
  - Books acknowledged by all Xns (21/27)
    - 4 Gospels, Acts, 13 Paul, 1 Pet, 1 Jn, Rev
  - Disputed by some Xns (6/27 + 4 outside)
    - Heb, Jas, 2 Pet, 2-3 Jn, Jude
    - Didache, Hermas, Ps-Barnabas, Gosp Hebrews

# Consensus Reached

- By about 325, Eusebius lists 4 categories:
  - Acknowledged (21-22/27) – adds Heb; Rev?
  - Disputed but familiar to most (5/27) – not Heb
  - Spurious but Orthodox (0-1/27) – Rev?
  - Heretical – Gnostic Gospels & Acts
- Finally, in the generation after Eusebius, a consensus is reached on the 27 books we now use as the proper books to be in the NT.
- For more details on this, see my PP talk “The Canon of the New Testament.”



A stack of three Bibles is shown. The top Bible is small and has a gold cover. The middle Bible is larger and has a red cover. The bottom Bible is the largest and has a dark cover. In front of the Bibles is a yellow notepad with a black pen resting on it. The entire scene is set against a light, slightly blurred background.

# Conclusions on the Books of the Bible

# Conclusions

- At a distance of 1600 years or more from the decisions of the Jewish community and the early Christians, we do not have all the information they had when they made these decisions.
- We do know that a consensus on the OT existed by NT times, and that a consensus on the NT had been reached by AD 400.
- We understand that God controls history, and that we can trust Him to make sure the results He desired were obtained.

