

New Testament Canon – Notes from PowerPoint Slides

SLIDE 2 Manuscripts

Scroll was a long piece of material, usually leather and was the principal form of manuscripts before the time of Christ. Codex was a long piece of either leather or papyrus, folded up in a format like a modern book with a binding. Most common form of manuscripts after 200 AD.

Papyrus was a 12-15 foot reedy plant found in Nile delta with thick, hollow stalks. They were split open, rolled out and glued together. Limited to 30 feet in length and least likely to survive for long periods without disintegrating. Vellum or parchment was specially prepared leather using calf/antelope skins (vellum) or sheep/goat skins (parchment). Vellum became the chief material for creating manuscripts in early.

SLIDE 3 Manuscripts

Except for Revelation, NT written by AD 69 because the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 is not mentioned. Few Aramaic words in NT:

“Abba” (Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6)

“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani” (Matthew 27:46)

“Maranatha” (1 Corinthians 16:22)

Latin began to replace Greek in ~AD 200; AD 300s had many Latin copies, but many were of poor quality. Latin *Vulgate* – Jerome worked from Bethlehem and translated to create a standardized version for the common people ~AD 380-400. Combined the translation from several Latin manuscripts. Became the standard text for the West for about 1000 years and included the Apocrypha, even though Jerome did not want to translate the Apocrypha.

OT of Jesus time was a Greek translation of Hebrew known as the Septuagint (250 -170 BC), which writers of NT quoted.

SLIDE 4 Manuscripts

Codex Sinaiticus in the British Library - entire New Testament

SLIDE 5 Manuscripts

John Rylands Fragment has writing on front and back (codex format).

SLIDE 6 Manuscripts

500 words in NT do not appear in classical Greek.

SLIDE 8 Manuscripts

Written shortly after the events with eyewitnesses still alive. Irenaeus called the Matt-Mark-Luke-John the “four pillars of the gospel”.

SLIDE 9 Manuscripts

Christian author Tertullian said that the apostles letters could still be accessed and read in AD 196.

SLIDE 10 Manuscripts

Every variation from every manuscript counted (1 error copied 10x =10 variants), but can be reduced to 100-200 because most are minor; no significant effect on meaning. Example: Mark 5:1 Similar to our city of Newark as compared to New York or New York City as compared to New York State

Oldest manuscripts do not have these passages:

Mark 16:9-20

John 7:53-8:11 has a different writing style and the flow of the text seems fine without this passage

Luke 23:34 Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

99.4% textual integrity level (without these passages)

Criteria for variations: oldest manuscripts, wide range of manuscripts, number of geographic locations, scribe created or scribe’s notes? More difficult reading is probably the original.

SLIDE 11 Manuscripts

Acts 8:36-38 “As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” ^[37] And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.”

Some manuscripts include here *Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” The eunuch answered, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”*

1 John 5:7-8 “For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.”

Late manuscripts of the Vulgate *testify in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.* ⁸ *And there are three that testify on earth: the* (not found in any Greek manuscript before the fourteenth century)

Mark 1:41 Jesus felt compassion and healed the leper. Some manuscripts say that Jesus felt anger and healed the leper. NIV 1984 “Jesus filled with compassion...” NIV 2011 “Jesus was indignant...” In 1998, the authoritative book *Text und Textwert* recorded only two Greek manuscripts (and a few early Latin ones) that contained the reading expressing Jesus’ anger. But Dr. Jeff Cate showed that one of those two Greek manuscripts does not contain the word for either anger or compassion, the scribe simply left it out Just as Matthew and Luke did. The other Greek manuscript, the AD 400-500 Codex Bezae, may have the better (original) reading. NT scholar Bart Ehrman points out “one factor in favor of the ‘angry’ reading is that it sounds *wrong*.” It is much easier to believe that early scribes

were troubled by Jesus' anger and changed it to his feeling compassion, rather than the other way around. As Ehrman explains, there are other passages in the Gospel of Mark that seem to support the reading conveying Jesus' anger.

Using 80,000+ quotes from early Christian writers in the AD 100-300, can reconstruct virtually the entire New Testament except for 11 verses.

SLIDE 12 Manuscripts

30 people named in New Testament are known from other sources

SLIDE 13 Manuscripts

Entire manuscripts less than 300 yrs after original writings (refers to Greek copies)

Large portions of NT 150 yrs after original writings. Complete books late 100s

Fragments 50 yrs after original writings

Almost 20,000 copies of NT translated into Latin (10,000), Syriac, Coptic, Gothic, Georgian, Ethiopic and others.

All NT Manuscripts before printing press: 35-40,000 (fragments or complete)

Earliest copy AD 110 Papyrus #52 currently in Manchester, England. Portion of John

97 papyri, which fill the gap between originals and parchments; late 2nd to 8th centuries (designated P1-P97)

299 uncials (capital letters on parchment) especially Sinaiticus (AD 350), Vaticanus (AD 325), Alexandrinus (AD 425). 4th – 9th century AD. Hundreds of vellum and parchment AD 300 →

2812 minuscules (lower case letters cursive, 9th-16th centuries). Thousands of cursive style AD 350 →

2281 lectionaries (ancient collections of favorite scripture passages used for worship or church readings)

SLIDE 15 NT Canon

4 Gospels circulated as a unit in early 100s, but order changed

Matthew – Mark – Luke – John (traditional, modern)

Matthew – John – Luke – Mark (3 Codex from AD 400[2] and AD 900)

1 Peter and 1 John—from early AD 100

Hebrews—authorship doubts delayed acceptance

James—late

Jude, 2 Peter—questioned but still thought useful

The Epistles – written to individuals, churches, or an area/region of churches

7 letters or “Universal” epistles circulated as a unit and often placed after Acts

SLIDE 16 NT Canon

Hebrew word QANEH, which means reed or cane (i.e. measuring stick, standard or ruler)

Chosen by church as a whole ~AD 150 with fixed lists already circulating

AD 140s—earliest NT canon; differences between lists worked out by AD 200

AD 367—earliest canon with identical books and order as modern NTs

Athanasius AD 367 – 1st to list 27 NT books after the council of Nicea in AD 325

Some earliest lists include non-apostolic writings such as Epistle of Barnabas and Shepherd of Hermes (AD 100). Muratorian Fragment mentions that the Shepherd of Hermes could be read in public, but that it was not to be considered as part of the apostolic writings

Muratorian Fragment (AD 180) early list showed Luke, John, Acts, all letters except Hebrews, James, 1-2 Peter, 1 John. 3rd century Christian leader Origen recorded the accepted list of books, which is identical to ours. First major church council at Nicea in AD 325 showed NT canon had been unchanged for over 100 years

Criteria – ancient, apostolic, used widely in church, seen as orthodox

Efficient Roman postal system (60 miles/day), but not all churches had the same documents

Most churches did not have all 27 books until 2nd century, some not until 4th century

SLIDE 17 Gospels

Ancient “Bios” or life:

- Continuous prose narrative style

- Three part structure (intro, character, death or vindication)

- Discourse to express events, teachings and beliefs

- Life held up as example, but not much interest in inner life

- Names, dates or formidable influences are not as important

SLIDE 19 Gospels

Nobel Prize in Chemistry 1904 – discovered Noble gases

Comment about NT writer Luke, but originally set out to prove Luke made errors about events, dates, titles of dignitaries

Luke claims careful research and mentions 32 countries, 54 cities and 9 islands with no errors

SLIDE 20 Gospels

Infancy Gospel of Thomas – As a five-year-old, Jesus supposedly uses his divine power to purify water, makes sparrows out of mud on the Sabbath, then transforms them into real sparrows that fly away. Jesus caused a child to be “withered” who had irritated him. Another child is struck dead after running into Jesus. After raising a dead child to life, Jesus begins using his powers for good and heals everyone he had withered or struck dead.

Gospel of Thomas - Peter said “Let Mary go away from us, because women are not worthy of life.” Jesus replied to Peter, “Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the domain of heaven.”

Gospel of Phillip – Jesus relationship with Mary Magdalene (i.e. Da Vinci Code)

Gospel of Judas - no miracles, no healings, no passion account, no historical content; Jesus revealed secret, deeper knowledge of his purpose and ministry to Judas Iscariot. This Gospel reveals deeper knowledge (*gnosis*). Mythical characters; Jesus is Seth, one of the five rulers of the underworld.

Gospel of Peter – the cross comes out of the tomb moving and talking; King Herod orders Jesus execution

Apocalypse of Peter – Jesus gives Peter a tour of heaven and hell

Acts of Paul – baptizes a lion, then that lion saves him in the arena at Ephesus

Acts of John – finds bedbugs in his bed at an inn and commands them to leave

Gnostics - no apostolic authority, not historical facts. They interpreted their stories/myths as allegories with deep, hidden meaning.

SLIDE 21 Epistles or Letters

Paul executed in Rome AD 67

Peter died in Rome AD 68

Most letters dictated, written with pen and ink on papyrus, hand delivered and read aloud

Standard format – greeting, a wish for good health, body of letter, farewell

SLIDE 22 Gnostics

Gnostics – Greek word *gnosis* which means knowledge. They viewed three types of people:

- (1) animalistic people with no afterlife
- (2) faith-based people with good deeds that God will reward in the afterlife of heaven
- (3) Gnostics or “elite” Christians or insiders who have the true, deeper knowledge of who they truly are and are trapped in this life, until they are freed from this life and return to the life they had before. Correct knowledge is the way of salvation, which shows you who you really are and allows you to escape this material world. The Gnostics believe that they had a pre-existence. They have a range of myths that describe how these divine “sparks” came to be entrapped in this world. Jesus was one of the divine messengers who can disseminate this true knowledge.

Marcion (AD 85-160) – 2nd century Christian thinker interpreted OT literally and that the God portrayed in OT could not be the same God proclaimed by Jesus and Paul. Jesus comes from a different God. He came to save people from the wrathful God of the OT. He believed in two gods. The one true God was unknown to this world until Jesus appeared.

Marcionites were anti-Jewish. Jesus did not come from the created God. Jesus did not come from a sexual union between Mary and Joseph. He was not really human, but only appeared as human. They viewed Jesus as docetic, or being God but not human. Had Paul’s letters and Luke’s gospel. His “Bible” consisted of Luke and Paul’s letters, but nothing from the Jewish OT. He felt the Christian “Bible” could not include those books, but his views and interpretation did not win out.

Ebionites – 2nd century Jewish Christians. Jesus was born naturally (sexual union between Mary and Joseph) and he was not divine. Had to follow the Jewish Law to be a Christian. Their copy of Matthew had Chapters 1-2 missing. Irenaeus was probably the first to use the term "Ebionites" to describe a heretical judaizing sect, which he regarded as “stubbornly clinging to the Law”.

SLIDE 22 Revelation

Apocalyptic style especially spoke to the hearts of the people in times of turmoil, oppression and hopelessness. The word denotes unveiling, pulling back of the curtains in order to reveal what is truly going on in the heavenly realms. Greek word *Apokalupsis* means a revealing or an unveiling. Often times, there are visions and bizarre images conveyed through a heavenly being. These visions are meant to explain what is happening now or what will happen in the near future. Apostle John wrote it on island of Patmos

Normal prose – we take everything literally, unless forced to do otherwise

Apocalyptic prose – we take everything figuratively, unless forced to do otherwise

404 verses → 200-300 allusions to the OT in apocalyptic style, commonly used by many of the OT prophets

Fire of Rome AD 64, Nero blamed on Christians, executed Paul and Peter AD 68

The Anti-Christ or The Beast is referring to the Roman Emperors – number 666; if you spell Caesar Nero in Hebrew letters (each letter has a numerical equivalent) and sum all letters, their numerical value is 666. 1995-2007 Left Behind Series (fiction) or 1970 Late Great Planet Earth (world ends in 1988)

Roman ruler Domitian AD 81-96, he demanded worship as “Lord and God” during his lifetime rather than after he died. He was ruthless, narcissistic and paranoid.

Brought church into direct conflict with the Roman state. For the next 200 years, being a Christian would remain illegal.

Main point to the Christians – Rome and Domitian will not win in the end. God is working and He will prevail. Don't lose your faith!