



WHY ARE THERE 66 BOOKS IN THE BIBLE?

Understanding the Canon of Scripture

Based on *Written and Read – Season 1, Episode 3*

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INTRODUCTION

If you open a Bible and start flipping through it, you'll notice something right away.

There are a lot of books.

Genesis, Exodus, Psalms, Isaiah, Matthew, Romans, Revelation.

And at some point, a question naturally comes to mind:

Why these books? Why not more? Why not fewer? Why exactly sixty-six?

That question matters more than many people realize.

Because if the Bible is truly the Word of God, then understanding why these books are included helps strengthen our confidence in what we are reading.

This is not just about numbers. It is about **trusting the authority of Scripture**.

THE OLD TESTAMENT: ALREADY ESTABLISHED

The first part of the Bible, the Old Testament, contains thirty-nine books.

These writings were given to the Jewish people over many centuries, from the time of Moses through the prophets.

What is important to understand is this:

The Old Testament was already recognized as Scripture long before the time of Christ.

Jesus Himself confirmed this.

“All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms...” (Luke 24:44)

When Jesus referred to “the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms,” He was affirming the entire structure of the Hebrew Scriptures.

These three divisions represent the same content we now organize into thirty-nine books.

So while the order may differ from the Hebrew arrangement, the content is the same.

That means:

The Old Testament you hold today is the same Scripture Jesus affirmed.

THE NEW TESTAMENT: RECOGNIZED BY THE EARLY CHURCH

The New Testament contains twenty-seven books, written during the first century.

These include:

- The Gospels, which record the life and ministry of Jesus
- Acts, which describes the early church
- The Epistles, which instruct believers
- Revelation, which speaks of what is to come

As these writings were produced, they were not hidden away. They were:

- Read publicly in churches
- Copied and shared
- Circulated across regions

How Were These Books Recognized?

The early church did not randomly choose books. They recognized them based on clear principles:

1. **Apostolic Authority:** The book was written by an apostle or closely connected to one.
2. **Doctrinal Consistency:** The teaching agreed with what God had already revealed.
3. **Widespread Acceptance:** The book was recognized across many churches, not just one location.

This process was not based on preference. It was based on truth.

DID THE CHURCH CREATE THE BIBLE?

A common misconception is that church leaders gathered together and decided which books would be in the Bible.

That is not what happened.

Church councils in later centuries did address the canon, but they did not create it.

By the time those councils met, the same twenty-seven books of the New Testament were already widely recognized and in use.

The councils simply **confirmed what believers had already received**.

Recognition, Not Creation

This is the key idea:

The church did not create Scripture. The church recognized Scripture.

The authority of the Bible comes from God, not from human decision.

Even during the time of the apostles, their writings were already being received as the Word of God:

“When ye received the word of God... ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God...” (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

Peter even referred to Paul’s writings as “Scripture”:

“...as they do also the other scriptures...” (2 Peter 3:16)

This shows that recognition of New Testament Scripture began very early.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER BOOKS?

You may have heard of other writings like:

- The Apocrypha
- The Gospel of Thomas
- Other early religious texts

So why are these not included in the Bible?

There are clear reasons:

- They were written much later
- They lack connection to the apostles
- Some contain teachings that contradict Scripture

Because of this, they were **not recognized as inspired Scripture** by the early church.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SIXTY-SIX BOOKS

When you hold a Bible in your hands, you are holding a recognized collection of inspired writings.

- Thirty-nine books in the Old Testament
- Twenty-seven books in the New Testament

Together, they form the complete canon of Scripture.

And this process of recognition did not happen randomly.

It unfolded over time as God's people identified the writings that carried His authority.

Here is a simple way to understand it:

God gave His Word.

God preserved His Word.

God's people recognized His Word.

WHY THIS MATTERS

This is not just a historical discussion.

It affects how you view your Bible.

If the Bible were simply a collection chosen by people, its authority would be questionable.

But if the Bible is a recognized collection of books inspired by God, then its authority is secure.

That means when you open your Bible, you are not reading human opinion.

You are reading **the Word of God.**

CONCLUSION

So why are there sixty-six books in the Bible?

Because those are the books that:

- Were inspired by God
- Were preserved through history
- Were recognized by God's people

The church did not create the Bible.

The church recognized the books God had already inspired.

And that truth gives us confidence.

The Bible you hold is not random. It is reliable. It is trustworthy. It is God's Word.

LOOKING AHEAD

This leads to another important question:

Why were some books left out of the Bible?

That is where we will go next.