

# Apostolic Canonization of the NT before AD 70 (Part 1)

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By Ed Stevens (All rights reserved)

This article affirms that all 27 books of our New Testament were *written, collected, and certified* as authoritative by the apostles before they passed from the earthly scene just before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The word *canon* simply means the list of sacred writings considered by Christians as inspired, inerrant, and absolutely authoritative for all matters of doctrine and practice. Although the New Testament does not use the word *canon* or *canonical* in reference to its contents or to the collection of Old Testament books, the concepts of *canonicity* and *canonization* (including such concepts as inspiration, authority, direct revelation, and Scripture) are found in the New Testament. In this article, we will look at some New Testament contexts where these concepts are either implicitly or explicitly mentioned.

Contrary to the claims of the Roman Catholic Church, it did not give us the canon of Scripture—the Holy Spirit did. The Roman Church’s claim is based on the idea of *apostolic succession*. As we Protestants are quick to point out, the office of apostle (specifically the twelve “apostles” of Christ, not the apostles or missionaries of the churches like Barnabas or Mark) required direct eyewitness experience of the resurrected Christ, full inspiration and empowerment by the *Paraclete* (the Holy Spirit or “comforter”), and direct revelation and commission from Christ. The only exceptions to this were those whom Jesus directly commissioned (such as Paul and James) or those upon whom Peter and the apostles laid their hands (such as Mark, Luke, and Jude) using the canonical authority (“the keys of the Kingdom,” Matt 16:19) that Christ had given to Peter. That authority passed away permanently when Peter and the other inspired apostles and prophets left the earthly scene.

If that authority of Peter and the apostles had been given to each successive generation of church leaders (i.e., apostolic succession) after the passing of Peter and the apostles, it would mean that the gift of inspiration was also passed down perpetually, thus keeping the canon open forever. The Mormons especially, with their *Book of Mormon*, would love that idea of the canon still being open, as would the Moonies with their writings of Sun Myung Moon. The Roman Catholic idea of apostolic succession opens the door for all kinds of confusion and corruption to creep into the church, and cheapens the idea of the inspiration, inerrancy, and absolute authority of the true canon of Scripture.

However, this idea of a closed canon by the time of the passing of the apostles is a sword that cuts both ways. Not only does it rule out the Roman Church’s claim of having the right to decide the content of our canon, it rules out *all* other claims by Protestants (and the cults as well). What we are affirming here is that the apostles were the only ones who had the inspiration and authority to not only *write* inspired Scripture, but also to infallibly *decide* which books were authoritative. Subsequent church leaders were neither inspired, inerrant, eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ, nor directly commissioned by Him. This means that the only Christians who were ever qualified to set the boundaries of the New Testament canon were those very apostles who wrote the inspired books in the first place. This view is called *apostolic canonization*. It is not a new theory nor is it exclusive to Preterism (cf. Ernest L. Martin, *Restoring the Original*

Bible, 1994), but it is certainly consistent with the Preterist idea of a pre-70 date for all the NT books.

The challenge to both Protestants and Catholics is now clear: Does the New Testament contain historical evidence which demonstrates not only that the apostles *wrote* those inspired books, but also made an authoritative, *certified collection* of them? That is the burden of this series of articles, and to demonstrate this we must go back before the Athanasian Canon of the fourth century, before the Muratorian Fragment (late second century, ca. 170 AD), and even before the New Testament books were written, to look at the Old Testament basis for the development of a New Testament canon. We find a chain of canonical authority that begins with Moses and ends with “the prophet like Moses.”

The LORD said to me [Moses], “. . . I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put **My words** in his mouth, and he shall speak to them **ALL that I command him**. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to **My words** which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.” (Deut 18:17-19 NASB95)

[Peter speaking] Moses said, “The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to him you shall **give heed to everything** He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not **heed that prophet** shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.” (Acts 3:22-23 NASB95)

While he [Peter] was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them [during the Transfiguration], and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; **listen to Him!**” (Matt 17:5 NASB95; cf. Luke. 9:35)

Jesus was the prophet like Moses who was to come. Moses was the archetype, both in the spoken word and the written word. Moses first spoke the word, and then later wrote it down. Christ certainly spoke the word, but did not write it down. But we can see in the pages of the New Testament that Jesus was making preparations through the Paraclete for His Word to be written down by His apostles and prophets. Interesting in this regard is Christ’s statement about the value of a scribe who became a disciple of the kingdom:

And Jesus said to them, “Therefore every **scribe** who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who **brings out of his treasure things new and old.**” (Matt 13:52 NASB95)

The scribe who became a disciple of Jesus would use his talents to produce treasures both **new** and old (note the word “new” here). None of the twelve apostles were scribes by trade, as far as we know. So this means Jesus anticipated some scribes becoming Christians and using their writing and copying skills to produce some “**new**” canonical Scripture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the oversight of the twelve apostles. Both Mark and Luke might fit this scenario.

Several times Jesus mentions to the apostles the coming work of the Paraclete: “. . . do not worry about how or what you are to say, for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say, for it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you” (Matt 10:19-20)

NASB95). Jesus promised to send to them the Holy Spirit, Who would “teach you **ALL** things,” “bring to your remembrance **ALL** that I said to you,” “guide you into **ALL** the truth,” and “disclose to you what is to come” (John 14:26; 16:13 NASB95; emphasis mine). Notice the use of the word “**ALL**” in three of these phrases regarding the work of the Paraclete. This does not sound like the canon would be left open after the Paraclete finished giving them **ALL** things, **ALL** truth, and brought to their remembrance **ALL** that Jesus wanted them to teach. Nothing would be left out—the Holy Spirit would make sure **the whole** Word of Christ was completely revealed, taught, and written down—after which the canon would be closed.

Just before His ascension, Christ claimed that He had **ALL** authority [including canonical authority] in heaven and on earth, and therefore commissioned the twelve (and Paul later; see Rom 1:5 and Gal 1:1-16) to make disciples of **ALL** the nations and to teach them to observe **ALL** that He had commanded them, and that He would be with them **ALL** the days until the End of the Age (Matt 28:18-20; cf. Deut 18:18-19). Notice that the very authority (**ALL** authority in heaven and earth) which Jesus claimed to have, was the very authority Moses said that the prophet like him would have (Deut 18:19), and that the prophet like Moses would speak **ALL** that God commanded him to speak. Jesus said repeatedly to his disciples (Matt 11:27; John 3:35; 5:22; 13:3; 17:2) that the Father had given Him **ALL** the words and **ALL** the authority, and that He was now commissioning (authorizing) them to go and teach **ALL** the nations **ALL** that He had taught them. The King was sending out His authorized emissaries. Through the work of the Paraclete, Jesus passed **ALL** of His inspired words, as well as the authority (the authorization) to teach it and write it down and certify it as true, to Peter and the apostles. In addition to the great commission authority given generally to the twelve, Peter was also given the keys of the Kingdom (Matt 16:19), which included canonical authority. Whatever Peter bound or loosed on earth was to be considered as being bound or loosed by Christ himself in heaven. But that authority was not passed on to succeeding generations of church leaders after Peter.

Christ sent the Paraclete to be with the apostles “**ALL** the days” (of their lifetime) to enable them to complete the great commission before the End of the Age. The Paraclete’s presence with them, and His work in and through them, would continue to the End of the Age. If the End of the Age is still future, then the Roman Catholic idea of apostolic succession must be true. However, it seems clear from Jesus’ use of the phrase “End of the Age” in Matthew 24:3 that “the end” refers to the end of the Jewish age in AD 70. This means that the disciples would have completed the proclamation of the gospel before the End of the Age in AD 70. Both the apostle Paul and Eusebius affirm that it was accomplished:

. . . [the] gospel . . . **has been made known to ALL the nations.** . . . (Rom 16:25-27 NASB95, cf. Rom 10:18; 15:19)

. . . the gospel which has come to you, just as **in ALL the world** also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing . . . (Col 1:5b-6a NASB95)

. . . the gospel that you have heard, which was **proclaimed in ALL creation under heaven** . . . (Col 1:23 NASB95)

At that very time, indeed, the voice of his holy apostles “**went throughout ALL the earth, and their words to the end of the world.**” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.8.11 – Kirsopp Lake translation)

The exclusive authority to *deliver* Christ’s one true distinctive gospel was given *only* to the first-century apostles and prophets. Jesus gave Peter the keys of the Kingdom (Matt 16:19), so

that whatever he bound or loosed would be authoritative for **ALL** generations to come (“*once for ALL* delivered to the saints” Jude 3, emphasis mine). Whatever else this binding and loosing authority might have meant, it at least included the authority to write, collect, and certify the canon of Scripture. So if Peter allowed or disallowed something, it was considered as having been bound or loosed by Christ Himself. Evidently Peter recognized (canonized) James and Jude as inspired witnesses of their risen brother Jesus, the same way he recognized (canonized) Paul as an inspired witness of the resurrected Christ. According to tradition, Mark and Luke wrote under the supervision of Peter and Paul respectively. Jude 3 affirms that Peter and those whom Peter canonized did *deliver* (i.e., write, collect, and certify) that inspired canon faithfully:

Beloved, while I was making every effort to **write you** about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to **write to you** appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was **once for ALL handed down [delivered] to the saints**. (Jude 3 NASB95)

The canonical authority which Peter possessed was not passed down successively to each new generation of church leaders. After the passing of Peter and the other apostles from the earthly scene, no one has the authority to write, collect, or certify the canon because they are unable (neither inspired nor empowered) to do so. The Roman church failed to realize that the inspiration and empowerment was not passed down successively to each new head bishop of the Roman church. That failure raises a whole host of historical issues that need to be analyzed by Preterists as we continue the process of Reformation and Restoration.

Evangelical Christians affirm that the first-century apostles were inspired and their writings were canonical. But we have not all taken the next logical step to conclude that the *only* ones who could infallibly decide which books were canonical were those who had been divinely inspired to write them in the first place. The apostles, and Peter specifically, accomplished that *writing, collection* and *certification* of the canon before they left the earthly scene.

In the following articles, we will look more closely at each of these three steps in the process of delivering the canon to the saints: writing, collecting, and certifying. The burden of those holding the *apostolic canonization* view is to demonstrate that all three steps occurred during the lifetime and under the oversight of the twelve apostles (and Peter especially) in the first century before AD 70.

## Apostolic Canonization of the NT before AD 70 (Part 2)

For the Fall 2009 Issue of Fulfilled Magazine (Vol. 4 Issue 3)

by Ed Stevens

In our previous article, which was the first in this series, we introduced the idea of the New Testament canon of Scripture being written, collected, and certified by the apostles before they left the earthly scene (i.e., before AD 70). This idea is called *Apostolic Canonization*. In this article, we will look more closely at the first step in the production of a New Testament canon: the writing of all New Testament books before AD 70.

It is easy to support a pre-70 date for the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, since Luke and Acts were written before Paul's trial in AD 61 and Luke claims that he was aware of at least two other gospel accounts (probably Matthew and Mark) before he wrote his gospel (Luke 1:1). Furthermore, the gospel of Luke contains some of the unique material found in either Matthew or Mark, but not in both. Therefore, Matthew and Mark's gospels must have been among Luke's research material, thus predating his gospel. Luke's gospel, however, does not show any awareness of the material unique to John's gospel, suggesting that John was probably written after Luke. We can also date all fourteen of Paul's epistles (including Hebrews, which is found in all extant ancient complete collections of Pauline epistles) prior to his martyrdom under Nero in AD 64. We also know James, the Lord's brother, wrote his epistle before he was martyred in AD 62. The epistle of Jude appears to have been written about the same time as the second epistle of Peter, since there is considerable similarity of content. Since Peter was martyred under Nero in AD 64-65, his two epistles were obviously written before AD 70. This puts a pre-70 date on all New Testament books except the writings of the Apostle John.

Most evangelical scholars agree that all 27 books of our New Testament canon were written before the apostles died, but they do not terminate the apostolic generation until AD 95, the alleged date of John's death. This presumed longevity of John leaves the door wide open for a post-AD 70 date for the Johannine writings—i.e., the Gospel of John, the three epistles of John, and the book of Revelation—thirty years after the deaths of Apostles Peter and Paul in AD 64-65. This article defends the idea that the Apostle John also died in the Neronian persecution in AD 64-65, thus implying that all of the New Testament books, including John's writings, were written before AD 70.

In Matthew 20:20-23 (and its parallel in Mark 10:35-40) the mother of the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, asked Jesus to place her two sons on his right and left when He came into His Kingdom.

*But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you [plural] are asking. Are you [both] able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They [both] said to Him, "We [both] are able." He said to them [both], "My cup you [both] shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father." (Matt 20:22-23 NASB95)*

Jesus asked *both* sons (not just James) if they were able to drink the cup (of martyrdom) which He was about to drink, and they *both* said to Him that they were able. Jesus then said to

*both* of them (James and John) that they *both* would indeed drink the same cup (of martyrdom), implying that they would not live out their full lives nor remain alive until His Parousia, but instead would be cut short by martyrdom. James (the brother of John) was killed by Herod Agrippa I in about AD 44 (Acts 12:1-2). But when did John drink the cup of martyrdom?

Josephus (*Antiq.* 20:200 in Thackeray, or *Antiq.* 20.9.1 in Whiston) mentions that “James (the Lord’s brother) and *some of his companions*” were arrested by Annas II in April of AD 62 during the three months between the end of Festus’ and the beginning of Albinus’ procuratorships. Josephus says that James was killed by Annas II, but he does not say what happened to the others who were arrested. It is possible that John was one of those companions, but since John was a friend of the Annas family (as John himself tells us in John 18:15-16), he may have been exiled to Patmos rather than being killed. This would explain why and when and how John was exiled to Patmos.

Since Luke’s gospel (written before Paul’s trial in AD 61-63) does not reflect any awareness of the unique material in John’s gospel, nor does his book of Acts (also finished before Paul’s trial in AD 61-63) mention the exile of John to Patmos, it seems probable that the gospel of John was written after Luke had already composed his gospel account (ca. AD 60), and that the book of Revelation, written during John’s exile to Patmos, was composed after the book of Acts and after Paul’s trial in Rome began in AD 61. The date for Luke and Acts then becomes the peg on which we hang the dates for several of the New Testament books.

The book of Revelation would have been written after John was arrested and exiled in AD 62. That would place its writing at about AD 62-63, either while Paul was still on trial in Rome (AD 61-63) or shortly after his release (AD 63). Since the book of Revelation clearly warns its readers to “not add to . . . nor take away from this book of prophecy” (Rev 22:18-19), tradition has taken this as implying that the book of Revelation was the last book of the New Testament to have been written. But that is not a necessary implication, especially when both Paul and Peter reflect possible awareness of the book of Revelation (cf. 1 Pet 5:13; Ephesians; Colossians; Philippians; and Heb 12:22-29; 13:14). The Apocalypse, even on purely internal grounds, shows only that it was one of the last books to have been written. John’s gospel and his three shorter epistles appear to have been written before he was exiled, that is, before AD 62. If John was still being held under Roman guard on the island of Patmos when the Neronian persecution broke out two years later in the summer of AD 64, he most likely would have been killed by the Romans (right after Paul was killed, and shortly before Peter died ca. AD 64-65). This would have fulfilled Jesus’ prediction of John’s drinking the same cup of martyrdom (Matt 20:23) that his brother James had already drunk twenty years earlier (Acts 12:1-2).

That would mean that all four gospels were finished before the outbreak of the Neronian persecution in AD 64. Paul’s fourteen epistles (including Hebrews) were finished before he died in AD 64. Below is how we would sequence and date the 27 New Testament books. (For a detailed explanation of my reasoning for this, see my manuscript *First-Century Events in Chronological Order* (email me at [preterist1@preterist.org](mailto:preterist1@preterist.org) for ordering details):

- 1 Thessalonians (AD 52)
- 2 Thessalonians (AD 52)
- Galatians (AD 55)
- 1 Corinthians (AD 57)
- 2 Corinthians (AD 57)
- Romans (AD 58)

Matthew (pre-AD 58)  
Mark (pre-AD 58)  
Luke (AD 58-61)  
Acts (AD 58-61)  
John (AD 60-62)  
1, 2, 3 John (AD 61-62)  
James (AD 62)  
Revelation (AD 62-63)  
Ephesians (AD 63)  
Colossians (AD 63)  
Philemon (AD 63)  
Philippians (AD 63)  
Hebrews (AD 63)  
1 Timothy (AD 63)  
Titus (AD 63)  
1 Peter (AD 63)  
2 Timothy (AD 64)  
Jude (AD 64-65)  
2 Peter (AD 64-65)

Norman Geisler, in his article *The Dating of the New Testament* (<http://bethinking.org/bible-jesus/the-dating-of-the-new-testament.htm>), argues for a pre-AD 62 date for Luke and Acts, citing both William F. Albright and John A. T. Robinson as examples of liberal scholars who have suggested pre-AD 70 dates for most (if not all) of the New Testament documents. Robinson especially, in his *Redating the New Testament* (1976), defended the idea that every New Testament book must have been written before AD 70 since the destruction of Jerusalem “is never once mentioned as a past fact” in any of the New Testament documents (p. 13). Several conservative scholars have advocated a pre-70 date for all New Testament books (e.g., Arthur Ogden, Milton Terry, David Chilton, J. Stuart Russell, and Cornelius Vanderwaal).

So one of the three requirements for Apostolic Canonization—pre-AD 70 authorship—seems viable, and this first part of the process *must* be viable, otherwise the other two (collecting the books and certifying their canonical authority before AD 70) are automatically invalidated.

Ernest L. Martin, in his *Restoring the Original Bible* (1994) has argued for Apostolic Canonization on the basis of the Apostle John remaining alive until AD 95 and writing some of his books after AD 70, so that by the death of the Apostle John the canonization process was complete. But this series of articles will advocate that Peter held the keys of canonical authority and that all the canonical books must have been written by their respective authors, then collected, and certified by Peter before his death in about AD 64-65. Notice what Jesus said to Peter:

“I will give you [singular] the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you [singular] bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you [singular] loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” (Matt. 16:19 NASB95)

Because of Peter’s key role in the canonical process, as well as his pre-AD 70 death, this particular theory of Apostolic Canonization *before AD 70* becomes critically dependent on a pre-

70 date for all the New Testament books, including the Johannine corpus. Ernest Martin's theory that John provided the final work on the canon after AD 70 fails to satisfactorily explain how Peter's key authority to certify the canon could have passed successively to John without surrendering to the Roman Catholics on the apostolic succession issue. Either the NT books were all written before Peter's death in AD 64-65, or Peter's inspired authority to certify the canon (the keys of the Kingdom) was passed down to successive bishops (as the Roman Church claims).

Next time we will deal with the second step in the canon formation process, the gathering together of all the writings into a complete collection, where we will see more of the key role of Peter in all this.

## Apostolic Canonization of the NT before AD 70 (Part 3)

*By Ed Stevens*

In the first article of this series we introduced the idea that the apostles produced the entire New Testament canon before they passed from the earthly scene. In the second article we explained how every book of the New Testament was written before AD 70. This third article focuses on how all the New Testament books were circulated among the churches and gathered into complete collections before AD 70. The fourth and final article (in the next issue) will deal with the certification of those books as canonical before AD 70 by the apostles (especially Peter).

Were all twenty-seven New Testament books in circulation and available as a complete collection before AD 70? Acts and Paul's epistles can help us answer this question. Notice what Paul says to the church at Colossae:

*When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.*  
(Col 4:16, NAS95)

Many first-century churches had copies of the apostolic writings for public reading in their assemblies, as well as to lend to other nearby churches. The apostles took certified master copies of their books on their journeys, from which the churches could make their own copies. Evidence for this can be found in the colophons and data birds (literary and artistic elements used by authors to inform readers who wrote the book, when and where it was written, and under whose authority it was produced or sent) found on some of the earliest manuscripts (like Codex W). This implies a wide circulation of the books wherever the apostles traveled. The apostles—and Peter especially—would have maintained a complete certified collection of all these writings at the mother church in Jerusalem. Paul also mentions his collection of *books* and *parchments*:

*When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books [Gk. *biblia*, scrolls], especially the parchments [Gk. *membranas*].* (2 Tim 4:13, NAS95)

Paul had a collection of books (scrolls) and parchments (parchment sheets probably bound together in codex form). He evidently kept copies of his epistles with him so that the churches he visited could copy from his originals.

When Peter wrote his second epistle in AD 64, he showed that he was not only aware that Paul had written a number of epistles, but that he had evidently read them, and was here stating his approval of them:

*And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also **our beloved brother Paul**, according to the wisdom given him, **wrote to you**, as also in **all his letters**, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also **the rest of the Scriptures**, to their own destruction.* (2 Pet 3:15-16, NAS95)

There are four things we need to notice in these two verses (see the boldfaced words in the

text above). Peter refers to Paul in post-mortem eulogistic style (“our beloved brother”) as if Paul was already dead. He uses the past tense (“wrote to you”) in regard to Paul’s writing activities as if Paul was no longer writing to them. Peter then mentions Paul’s letters as a group (“all his letters”) as if he had access to a completed collection of them, which implies that Paul had already been martyred and was no longer writing letters to the churches. And finally, Peter places Paul’s collection of letters on a par with “the rest of the scriptures,” which certifies their inspiration and canonical authority. Peter here uses his “keys of the Kingdom” (binding and loosing) authority to pronounce the whole collection of Paul’s letters as canonical.

The point we want to stress about these two texts (2 Tim 4:13; 2 Pet 3:15-16) is that both Paul and Peter had access to a collection of New Testament documents. Peter had read Matthew’s gospel and found it lacking some of the details that he remembered about Christ, so Mark (his scribe and courier) wrote an account which included those details and perspectives of Peter. John supposedly remembered details that the other three gospels did not include, and recorded them in his gospel. Peter, Mark, and John would have done this writing in Jerusalem, and the church there would have maintained a master collection of all these writings for other churches to copy from. It is essential to the theory of Apostolic Canonization for the Jerusalem church (and Peter especially) to have in their possession a complete collection of apostolic writings before AD 70. By using the book of Acts, Paul’s epistles, and Peter’s epistles, it is easy to support this theory.

Luke states at the beginning of his gospel that “many have undertaken to compile an account” of the things that Jesus did and taught (Luke 1:1ff). Luke states that he researched those other accounts “carefully” (Luke 1:3) and compiled his account in chronological order so that Theophilus could know the exact truth about all these things. He obviously had access to those other gospels for a significant period of time while he was writing his own gospel. After Paul was arrested in Jerusalem in AD 58, he was imprisoned in Caesarea for two years before being sent to Rome. During those two years, Luke had ample time to go to Jerusalem, research the other gospel accounts, and write in collaboration with the apostles there. It was primarily Matthew and Mark to whom he had access, since Luke’s gospel shows the most similarity to their gospels, while showing no familiarity with John’s gospel (which was probably not written until after Luke had completed his gospel).

Paul’s imprisonment in nearby Caesarea for two years (AD 58-60) would have been a perfect opportunity for the Jerusalem church to make copies of all of Paul’s epistles (if they had not already done so on Paul’s previous visits to Jerusalem). This indeed was a very providential time for the writing, circulation, and collection of the New Testament books by the Jerusalem church under the leadership of the apostle Peter.

In addition to copies of his own epistles, Paul also had Luke, Matthew, and Mark’s gospels. Thus the only books Paul might not have possessed were those last few general epistles that were written after he was arrested and sent to Rome the first time. Since Mark was the scribe and courier for Peter, and traveled extensively throughout Syria, Turkey, Cyprus, Greece, and Rome, it is quite possible that Mark may have brought copies of those epistles with him to Rome. The travels of Paul, Mark, and the other apostolic traveling companions, could easily explain how most (if not all) of the New Testament manuscripts could have been copied at all the major churches in the Roman world.

Peter’s base of operations was Jerusalem, from where his two epistles were written. The epistle of Jude was evidently written about the same time as Peter’s second epistle. The remarkable similarities between Jude and Second Peter suggest that both epistles were written in

Jerusalem at about the same time. Both Matthew and Mark's gospels were also written in Jerusalem. John's gospel and three epistles were written in Jerusalem, as was the epistle of James. From 2 Peter 3:15-16 it seems clear that Peter (in Jerusalem) had access to the whole corpus of Paul's fourteen epistles (assuming Hebrews was written by Paul). And, as we noted above, Luke and Acts had been written four years earlier while Paul was imprisoned in nearby Caesarea. That leaves only one book (the book of Revelation, written on Patmos in AD 62-63) written outside of Palestine to which Peter may not have had access at the time he wrote his two epistles. However, noting the reference to "Babylon" in 1 Peter 5:13, some have suggested that Peter may have had access to the book of Revelation even before he wrote his first epistle in late AD 63 or early 64. If that was the case, Peter had access to all twenty-seven New Testament books before he was martyred in the Neronian persecution in late AD 64 or early 65. The book of Jude, written about the same time as Second Peter, even states that the system of faith chronicled in the New Testament had already been "*once for all delivered to the saints*" (Jude 3). Thus, the work of the Paraclete as described in John 14:25-26 and 16:12-13 was finished. In order for Jude to make such an absolute statement, he would have needed to have access to a complete collection of New Testament books (in Jerusalem especially), and also to have known that the collection was complete (because all the inspired writers were either dead or were about to be killed in the Neronian persecution) and therefore no more books were to be written.

The premise of the circulation and collection of all the New Testament writings in Jerusalem before AD 70 seems easily defensible. We will conclude this series in our next article by examining Peter's role in the certification of all these books as inspired and authoritative before he died in late AD 64 or early 65.

P.S. For a much more detailed explanation of the rationale for a pre-70 dating of all the New Testament books and their canonization before AD 70, you may order my manuscript, *First Century Events in Chronological Order*, which has recently been expanded to triple its size. A great deal of historical detail has been added. The new version can be ordered on our secure website order form ([www.preterist.org](http://www.preterist.org)). If you purchased the original 20-page version, you can get the new updated 70-page edition for \$5 plus shipping. Simply order it on our secure website order form ([www.preterist.org](http://www.preterist.org)) and mention in the comments box that you bought the original version and want to take advantage of the \$5 upgrade plus shipping.

## **Apostolic Canonization of the NT before AD 70 (Part 4)**

### **Peter Certified All 27 NT Books as Canonical**

*by Ed Stevens*

This is the fourth and last article in this series on apostolic canonization. Our focus will be on Peter's role in the process of producing a New Testament canon. We intend to demonstrate that Peter was the key person in the process of collecting the apostles' writings and certifying them as canonical. By canonical, we mean that a text was considered to be inspired and absolutely authoritative on the same level with "the rest of the Scriptures."

Is there any evidence that the twenty-seven books of our New Testament were acknowledged, affirmed, or claimed to have been inspired and absolutely authoritative like Old Testament Scripture? The Apostle John shows that he was self-aware of the inspiration and authority of his book of Revelation:

*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the **words of the prophecy**, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near. (Rev 1:3 NASB95)*  
*He who has an ear, let him hear **what the Spirit says** to the churches.*  
(Rev 2:7 NASB95; see the same phrase in Rev 2:11, 17, 29; and 3:6, 13)

Because Revelation claims to be inspired and directly revealed to John by the Holy Spirit, as a book of "prophecy," Revelation thus contains things that the Spirit wanted the churches to understand and obey. This is canonical language.

Likewise, the Apostle Paul claims that his gospel was not received from other men, but by a direct revelation from Jesus Christ:

*For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal 1:11-12 NASB95; cf. Eph 3:3)*

Paul placed his own "gospel" on the same level as "the Scriptures of the prophets," and consequently as an authoritative source for the establishment of not only the Roman church, but for "all the nations":

*Now to Him who is able to **establish you according to my gospel** and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the **revelation of the mystery** which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, **and by the Scriptures of the prophets**, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. (Rom 16:25-27 NASB95)*

In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul claims that the things he spoke to the Thessalonians were received by them as what they really are, "the word of God." The commandments Paul gave to the Thessalonians were by the authority of the Lord Jesus, and anyone who rejected those commandments was in effect rejecting God Himself (1 Thess 4:2, 8). Paul stated to the Corinthians "the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment" (1 Cor 14:37). These

statements were claims to inspiration, direct revelation, and absolute authority for his teaching, preaching, and writing. Paul clearly claimed that he had the same kind of revelation and inspiration that the other apostles possessed. His claims, however, could not certify his own writings as canonical unless Peter, who had the authority of Christ to bind and loose (Matt 16:19) acknowledged those writings as being inspired and authoritative on par with canonical Scripture.

In order for a literary work to be included in the canon of Scripture, it had to possess certain characteristics. The most important of those characteristics was that the Holy Spirit must have filled the prophet, *inspired* him, and enabled him to speak and write those words. The Apostle Peter established this principle very clearly in his second epistle when he wrote:

*But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Pet 1:20-21 NASB95)*

Later, in this same epistle, Peter wrote “*that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles*” (2 Pet 3:2 NASB95). Here, Peter placed the words of the apostles on par with the words of the Old Testament prophets. Thus, in this passage Peter is certifying all of the apostolic writings (e.g., Matthew, John, James, Jude, and his own writings) as being canonical.

Because some first-century Christians questioned the apostolicity (i.e., canonicity) of Paul's writings, Peter left no room for doubt. In this very same chapter, he wrote:

*. . . our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Pet 3:15-16 NASB95)*

Notice here that Peter put “all [the Apostle Paul's] letters” on par with “the rest of the Scriptures,” thus certifying that Paul's epistles were indeed canonical. These two statements in 2 Peter 3 place Peter's stamp of approval (canonical certification) upon all twenty-seven books of our New Testament, including the fourteen epistles of Paul (including Hebrews), the three synoptic gospels, the book of Acts, James, Jude, both of Peter's epistles, and all of John's writings).

Did the Apostle Peter have the authority to make canonical pronouncements like this? By all means! This was not the first time he and the apostles had sent out a decree. In Acts 15, the apostles and elders at the Jerusalem council composed a document which contained *decrees* (Gk. *dogmata*; cf. Acts 16:4) that were delivered to the Gentile churches in the *Diaspora*. That was an exercise of this same kind of canonical authority.

Indeed, Peter appears to have been the key leader in the whole process of deciding which books would be considered on a level with “the rest of the Scriptures.” This seems consistent with what Jesus said to him in Matthew 16:17-19:

*And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you [singular], Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you [singular], but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you [singular] that you [singular] are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. **I will give you [singular] the keys** of the*

*kingdom of heaven; and whatever you [singular] bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you [singular] loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”*  
(Matt 16:17-19 NASB95)

Notice that all of the second person pronouns in the three verses above are singular, referring exclusively to Peter. Jesus gave Peter the keys of the kingdom, so that whatever he bound on earth would be bound in heaven as well. I believe this grants Peter very important authority, which included the authority (and duty) to decide which New Testament writings were to be considered canonical.

In this series we have shown that apostolic canonization of the New Testament documents before AD 70 is a valid possibility, and one which deprives the Romanists of their apostolic succession argument and places the authority back into the hands of the first-century apostles (primarily Peter). The authority that Christ gave to Peter was *not* passed on to successive generations. Otherwise, writing by inspiration and certifying new books as canonical would have also continued, thus leaving the canon open forever. This means that the collection of writings approved by Peter and the apostles would have been the first and only *authoritative* canonical list. Furthermore, it means that *inspired* men, rather than later generations of uninspired men, did the writing, collecting, and certifying of that canonical list. The result is a canon we can trust, and which renders any determinations by later uninspired churchmen as being secondary and subordinate.

### **Conclusion**

I am not saying that all, or even many, of the churches throughout the Roman Empire had copies of all twenty-seven New Testament books. Jerusalem may have been the only church that had copies of all twenty-seven books, although it is possible that the churches of Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria did as well. The distribution of the canon is not necessary to the hypothesis of apostolic canonization. All that is necessary to this theory is that Peter, the other apostles, and the Jerusalem church had copies of all twenty-seven books, and that Peter (at the very least) gave his approval of them before he had passed from the earthly scene in AD 64-65. That much seems to be indicated by the statements of Peter and Paul which we examined in this series of articles. I believe this hypothesis, which is a very conservative approach to the New Testament canon, needs and deserves broad consideration from the conservative Christian community.

The bibliography of my main sources is below the Addendum. One of my main sources was Arthur Ogden's *The Development of the New Testament*. Unfortunately, this book is out of print (although you might find a used copy by searching the internet). For a much more detailed explanation of the rationale for a pre-AD 70 dating of all the New Testament books you can order my manuscript *First-Century Events in Chronological Order*, which has been expanded recently, tripling its size, and includes substantial additions of historical detail. The revised version can be ordered on our secure website order form at [www.preterist.org](http://www.preterist.org)

# Addendum

## Regarding John's Longevity

[QUESTION] I find it curious that you appear to be "swimming against the current" in postulating that John died in the Neronic persecution. Isn't a mainstay argument of Preterists that John was supposed to remain alive on earth until Christ returned?

[FROM ED] It may be swimming against the current of Roman Catholic tradition, but it is in sync with Jesus' own words of prophecy regarding both James and John. Several Protestant commentaries have noticed the following statements of Jesus to the two sons of Zebedee regarding their martyrdom before His return (Matt. 20:22-23) --

*But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you [plural] are asking. Are you [both] able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They [both] said to Him, "We [both] are able." He said to them [both], "My cup you [both] shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father." (Matt 20:22-23 NASB95, cf. see the similar statements in Mark 10:35-39)*

Was Jesus right when he predicted John's martyrdom? Or did Jesus' prediction fail to materialize? Who are we to believe (much later unreliable Catholic tradition or the first century inspired words of Christ)? It is much more Biblically consistent for us to believe that John did suffer martyrdom before Christ returned. In my pre-pub manuscript, FIRST CENTURY EVENTS, I explain how John was most likely killed about the same time that Peter and Paul were, in the Neronic persecution (AD 64-65). Since John was most likely on the Roman exile colony of Patmos at the time of the Neronic persecution (July AD 64), it would be easy to explain how and when he was killed. This would mean that James, Peter, John, and Paul were all killed before AD 70. We do not know who were the "some of you standing here" that would not die before the Parousia (Matt 16:27-28). But we do know from scripture that it did not include James, Peter, or John.

There is a problem for Preterists if John or any of the inspired apostles remained on earth beyond AD 70. If the gift of inspiration ceased at AD 70, then any of the apostles who remained alive after that would have been stripped of their inspiration and apostolic authority. That would mean that John, if he was still around, would have been unable to speak authoritatively against the heresies and deviant doctrines that began mushrooming immediately after AD 70. John would have been unable to authoritatively refute such writers as Papias who taught a literal millennial paradise on earth and claimed that he got it from John or his hearers. But we would expect the Apostles, especially John, to correct the errors of Papias if any of the apostles were still around after AD 70. We know from Matt 16:27-28 that "some of them" remained alive until the Parousia. But what about after AD 70? Why do we not hear from them again after AD 70? Why do none of them ever speak out against Papias or other heresiarchs? I solve that problem by suggesting that the few apostles who remained until the time of the Parousia were raptured out of there, so that none of them remained on earth after the Parousia. That explains why they did not speak up or write anything after AD 70.

It is this very problem (the supposed longevity of John beyond AD 70) which has given the futurists an advantage in the debate over the dates of the Johannine corpus. If John was still around after AD 70, how could you prove (to a futurist) that he did not write his gospel or the three short epistles AFTER AD 70?

The claim of inspiration ceasing at AD 70 would also be hard to defend if John or any of the inspired apostles were still around after AD 70. How could they suddenly lose their inspiration at AD 70? Once inspired, always inspired, until death forces the cessation! If we Preterists are correct in saying that all NT books were written before AD 70, then what happened to the gift of inspiration at AD 70? Did the remaining apostles suddenly lose their ability to teach and preach and write under inspiration? Then the alleged connection between the Chiliast Papias and Apostle John becomes very problematic for Preterists. Papias supposedly said that he got his strange notions from Apostle John or some of his hearers. Was that before AD 70 or after AD 70? Was it while John was still inspired, or after he lost his inspiration and was no longer able to teach the truth authoritatively? And how is it possible for an inspired apostle to suddenly lose his inspiration and authority?

It really is inconsistent for Preterists to teach that the gift of inspiration ceased at AD 70 if any of the inspired apostles (especially John) were still around after AD 70. Jesus had promised that some of them would live and remain until the Parousia. So what happened at the Parousia? Did they remain alive on earth after the Parousia without their gift of inspiration, or were they raptured at the Parousia so that none of them remained alive on earth afterwards? That seems to be a reasonable possibility, and it certainly solves the embarrassing problem of having to explain how the remaining apostles could lose their gift of inspiration while still alive on earth.

I am glad that Jesus at least settled the issue of John's longevity when he told both James and John that they BOTH would suffer martyrdom and NOT live and remain until His return. That explains why John was not around after AD 70 to oppose Papias and others who were teaching strange doctrines.

## **Regarding Apostolic Succession**

**[QUESTION]** I was a bit surprised at your statement about Peter's canonical authority (the keys of the Kingdom), coming from someone like yourself who is staunchly reformed.

**[FROM ED]** The Roman Catholics do not like what I say here about Peter having canonical authority, because they assert that whatever authority Peter was given by Christ was passed down successively to each new head bishop of the Roman church. I deny their apostolic succession idea by explaining that if bishops after Peter had his same inspiration and canonical authority, then they could write more inspired books and add them to the canon of scripture. The canon would still be open. This would mean that God is not through revealing (and fulfilling) His plan of redemption yet. This opens the door not only for continuing canonical writings from the Roman Catholics, but from a whole host of cult groups like the Mormons and Moonies as well. I discussed this idea in the first article of the series.

If the “keys of the kingdom” (Matt. 16:19) was NOT canonical authority, then we Protestants have a huge obligation to explain what the “keys” really were. The Roman Catholics have rightly placed the burden of proof upon the Protestants to explain that. Jesus says that Peter would have the authority to BIND and LOOSE. What was this binding-loosing authority? What did Peter have control over? If it did not at least include the authority to certify the canon of

inspired writings, then what was it? It probably included all the activities of Peter, such as we find in the book of Acts, including his role at Pentecost, Cornelius, the Jerusalem Council, etc. And we also need to ask who had the authority to decide which books were inspired and canonical if it was not Peter and the other inspired apostles. Did Jesus leave that decision to later churchmen who were uninspired and ill-equipped to make such important decisions? The inspired people who wrote the books would have been the appropriate folks to collect them and certify them as authoritative for the church of succeeding generations. Which would you rather have making those decisions: inspired apostles or later uninspired churchmen?

## **How Did Peter Use The Keys?**

In Matthew 16:19 Jesus said to Peter that He would give Peter the Keys of the Kingdom so that whatever Peter bound or loosed on earth would be considered as bound or loosed in heaven by Christ Himself. What were these keys and what was this binding and loosing authority? Did this binding and loosing authority include canonical authority, the right to decide whether a written document was inspired and canonical? Are there any texts in our New Testament which give examples of Peter using those Keys to unlock the doors of the Kingdom for anyone? Are there any examples of Peter using this binding and loosing authority on earth? Indeed there are. Let's look at a few of them:

Acts 1:15 -- In the meeting to select a replacement for Judas Iscariot, who stood up to speak and lead the proceedings?

Acts 2:14 -- On the day of Pentecost, who was the main spokesman? It was Peter who preached the gospel of the Kingdom and used his keys to open the doors of the Kingdom to the Jews first.

Acts 3:6, 3:12 and 4:8 -- Who was it who healed the lame man at the gate to the temple? Who was it who spoke to the crowds who saw this miracle performed by Peter? After Peter and John were arrested for healing the lame man and preaching Christ in the temple, which one of them was the spokesman at their trial? "Peter filled with the Holy Spirit said to them..." There is inspiration plain and simple. And inspiration is one of the requirements for canonicity.

Acts 5:3ff -- Who was it that struck both Ananias and Sapphira dead on the spot for lying about how much they sold their property for? Peter, of course! Neither James, John, nor Paul performed the quantity of miracles that Peter did. And certainly no pope of the Roman church has ever been able to duplicate this kind or this quantity of miracles. Peter was unique in this.

Acts 5:15 -- Peter performed so many miracles of healing that people laid their sick along the sides of the street so that when he came by, his shadow might fall on them (with the implication that they would be healed).

Acts 5:29 -- When the apostles were arrested, it was Peter who was mentioned first as giving a defense before the Sanhedrin?

Acts 8:14-20 -- When the apostles sent Peter and John down to Samaria to preach Christ to them, and Simon the Sorcerer tried to buy that power of imparting the Spirit from Peter and John, it was Peter who rebuked Simon and condemned him for trying to buy the gift of God. Here Peter and John opened the doors of the Kingdom to the Samaritans.

Acts 9:32-43 -- Peter healed the lame Aeneas in Lydda, and raised back to life Tabitha (Dorcas) in Joppa. Here is the first case of one of the twelve raising someone from the dead, and it was Peter who did it first.

Acts 10 -- Cornelius was told by an angel of God to send for Peter to come and deliver a message to him. Here is Peter using the Keys to open the doors of the Kingdom to the first gentiles (without requiring them to become Jewish converts first). This was an exercise of his binding and loosing authority to extend salvation to the gentiles without circumcision and law-keeping.

Acts 12:11 -- Agrippa I arrested James (son of Zebedee) and put him to death. When he saw it pleased the Jewish leaders, he had Peter arrested also, intending to have him killed also. But Peter was miraculously rescued by an angel at night and brought out of the prison so that he could continue his preaching.

Acts 15:7 -- In the Jerusalem Council regarding gentiles coming into the Church without having to be circumcised, it was Peter who was the first to take a leading role in the deliberations about what to do about the gentiles. "After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said..." Peter opened the door again for the gentiles to be accepted by the Jewish Christians as fellow-heirs of the grace of life (without circumcision and law-keeping). It was from this council under the oversight of Peter and the other apostles that there went forth decrees (Gk. dogmata) to the gentiles relieving them of any responsibility to be circumcised or keep the Law of Moses. This was definitely an instance of binding and loosing authority being exercised, and it was embodied in a written document composed by the inspired apostles. This may have been the first authoritative (canonical) document composed by the apostles, but it certainly would not be the last one. And it shows where the canonical authority resided (in the Mother Church in Jerusalem, specifically in the hands of the inspired apostles there, with Peter in the position of having the Key authority to bind and loose).

The above texts show the leading role Peter played in the early days of the church in opening the doors of the Kingdom to the Jews first, then to the Samaritans, and then to the gentiles. We also saw Peter using his binding and loosing authority to loose the gentiles from circumcision and law-keeping. It is apparent in the book of Acts and Paul's epistles especially that the early church viewed Peter as the primary authority among the apostolic leadership.

Next we want to look at some texts which illustrate Peter's use of this binding and loosing authority to certify the inspiration and authority of Paul and the other writers of the inspired New Testament documents.

Gal. 2:7-8 -- Paul testifies that Peter was directly authorized by Christ to take the gospel to the circumcised especially.

1 Cor. 15:5 -- Paul lists the post-resurrection appearances of Christ. The first appearance he lists was to Peter first, and then to the twelve. This is noteworthy. Christ appeared first to Peter, then to the twelve.

1 Pet. 1:1 -- Peter clearly claims to have that apostolic authority. See also 2 Pet 1:1.

Gal 1:17-19 -- Paul went up to Jerusalem (the true Mother Church, not Rome!) to become acquainted with Peter and meet with him for 15 days. James (the Lord's brother) was the only other apostle he met on that trip.

- Gal 2:1-10 -- On another trip to Jerusalem fourteen years later, Paul submitted to Peter, James, and John the gospel that he was preaching, for fear that he had been teaching in error. Paul here clearly recognized the authority of the Jerusalem apostolate as having the right to judge the veracity of his gospel. But James, Peter, and John extended the right hand of fellowship and approval of Paul's apostolic ministry. That was an exercise of canonical authority by Peter and the other apostles to recognize Paul as their fellow apostle in the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles. They used their binding and loosing authority to canonize Paul. But they were only binding on earth what had already been bound in heaven by Christ.
- 2 Pet 3:15-16 -- Peter pronounced "all of Paul's letters" as being on a par with "the rest of the Scriptures." This is canonical certification language, and Peter had the canonical authority (binding and loosing authority) to make such pronouncements. This effectively canonized all fourteen of Paul's epistles. The rest of the NT documents were automatically canonized by their connection to one of the twelve apostles. Peter, John, and Matthew were of the inspired apostolic band. James and Jude were brothers of Jesus. Mark and Luke were tightly connected with Peter and Paul respectively. Peter recognized every one of these writers as having the inspiration of the Paraclete and the authority of Christ to write inspired scripture.

## **BIBLICAL BASIS FOR CANONICITY OF THE NT BOOKS**

### A. Christ Has ALL Authority

1. Deut. 18:15-19 -- Moses said to obey Christ in everything (Acts 3:22-24; Jn. 5:46)
2. Matt. 28:18 -- Jesus claims ALL authority in Heaven and on earth

### B. Christ's ALL Authority Vested In His Word

1. Heb. 1:1-3 -- Now God speaks through His Son -- Christ is heir of ALL things -- Christ upholds all things by the Word of His Power
2. John 12:48-50 -- Jesus claims authority for His Word because it was coming from the Father who sent Him and told Him what to speak. The Words of Jesus would be the basis for the Judgment at the Last Day. That means that His Word is absolutely authoritative as the (canonical) standard of judgment. (John 14:10, 24; 15:15; 15:22)

### C. Christ's ALL Authoritative Word Was Given By The Holy Spirit to His Apostles and Prophets:

1. John 14:16-23 -- God would send the Holy Spirit to be with the Apostles and inside the Apostles. They would know then that Jesus was in the Father, and that they were in Christ, and that Christ was in them. The Father and Son would come and make their abode with the apostles.
2. John 14:26 -- The Holy Spirit would teach them ALL things and bring to their remembrance ALL that Jesus had said to them.
3. John 16:12-15 -- The Spirit would guide the apostles into ALL truth and disclose to them what is to come. He would take of Christ's things and disclose it to the apostles.

4. John 17:6-19 -- The Father Gave the Word to Jesus. Jesus gave the Word to the apostles. Jesus sanctified them in the Truth. Jesus sent them out with His Word that He had received from the Father.
  5. Matt. 28:18-20 -- Christ commanded the apostles to preach that ALL authoritative Word from the Father and Christ to ALL the world. The Holy Spirit would enable them to do that. Christ commissions and authorizes the Apostles to take His ALL authoritative Word to the whole world.
- D. Apostles Received ALL that the Spirit gave them, and claimed that authority, and taught ALL of what the Holy Spirit gave them:
1. Acts 2 - At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was given. The apostles received what had been promised. Now the ALL authoritative Word of the Father given to the Son would be given to the apostles through inspiration. Both their spoken and written words now were under the direct influence and provision of the Holy Spirit.
  2. Acts 9:17 -- At Paul's conversion, he was filled with the Holy Spirit.
  3. Gal. 1:1, 11-12 -- Paul claims this same kind of direct revelation (inspiration) and direct commission by Christ for His teaching (apostolic authority). See Eph. 3:1-5 also.
  4. 2 Pet. 1:3 -- granted to us **EVERYTHING** pertaining to life and godliness
  5. Acts 20:27 -- Paul did not shrink from declaring the **WHOLE** purpose of God.
  6. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 -- All [authoritative and canonical] scripture is given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
  7. 2 Pet. 1:20-21 -- men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God
  8. Syllogism: If something that is spoken or written is proven to be from the Holy Spirit, then it is inspired and authoritative. The apostles had the Holy Spirit giving them their spoken and written words. Therefore the spoken and written words of the apostles and prophets were inspired and authoritative.
  9. We no longer have the apostles speaking it to us. But we have the written record of what they taught by inspiration. So we now have that Authoritative Word that the inspired apostles and prophets have written.
- E. Apostles Wrote The ALL Authoritative Word By Inspiration
1. Rev. 1:11, 19 – John received the book of Revelation and wrote it down (clearest case of inspiration and direct revelation in the whole NT). And this is the same kind of writing by inspiration and authority that the other apostles were doing.
  2. 2 Pet. 1:12-15; 2 Pet. 3:1 – And just as the Spirit had "brought to his remembrance ALL that Jesus had taught him," Peter wrote it down for the saints so that after he had "departed" from this life the saints would be able to call it to mind and follow it. Peter obviously considered his writings as authoritative for not only his lifetime, but on beyond it.
- F. The Apostles Word (both spoken and written) was backed up by signs and wonders:
1. Acts 15:12 – ...listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles
  2. Heb. 2:3-4 – ...**confirmed** to us by those who heard; God also testifying with them, both by **signs and wonders and by various miracles** and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

3. Paul claims both apostolic authority and the prophetic gift of inspiration and God confirmed it openly by signs, wonders and miracles (Rom 15:15-19; 2 Cor. 12:12; Gal. 2:7-9; and 1 Cor. 14:5, 6)

G. Apostles Were Aware That They Had This Binding/Loosing Authority and Claimed It For Their Teaching (including both spoken and written teaching)

1. Acts 20:27 -- Paul did not shrink from declaring the whole purpose of God. Paul taught the whole gospel, not only by word of mouth, but also in his epistles.
2. 2 Thess. 2:15 -- hold to the tradition given by [spoken] word or [written] epistle
3. Eph. 3:3-4 -- the mystery was made known to Paul by direct revelation, which he wrote down for them, and by reading it they would understand the mystery
4. 2 Pet. 3:15-16 -- Peter bears witness to the canonical authority of Paul and his writings on a level with the other scriptures.
5. Gal. 1:1, 11-12 -- Paul claims this same kind of direct revelation (inspiration) and direct commission by Christ for His teaching (apostolic authority). See also Eph. 3:1-10; 2 Tim. 1:11; 1 Cor. 11:23; 11:2; 15:3; and Tit. 1:3.
6. 1 Cor. 14:37 -- recognize that the things Paul wrote are Lord's commandment (see also 2 Cor. 2:9; Col. 4:16; and 1 Thess. 5:27)
7. Acts 15:20-23, 30; 16:4 and 21:25 -- The apostles and elders in Jerusalem exercised the authority Christ had given them to settle the Gentile circumcision and law-keeping controversy. They wrote a decretal document (Gr. dogmata) which was delivered to all the churches. It is clear that the apostles in the Jerusalem church had authority to bind and loose on all matters of doctrine and practice in the church universal. This written document from the Jerusalem council was considered binding and absolutely authoritative. This is nothing short of canonical authority and canonical activity.
8. Gal. 2:7-9 -- Paul recognizes Peter's apostolic authority and direct commission by Christ to preach the gospel to the circumcision, while claiming his own apostolic authority and direct commission to preach to the Gentiles.
9. 2 Pet. 3:15-16 -- Peter bears witness to the canonical authority of Paul and his writings on a level with the other scriptures.
8. Other passages which affirm or illustrate the kind of authority that the apostles had been given by Christ: Matt. 10:14; Acts 1:8; Jas. 1:21; Gal. 2:8-9; Rev. 1:3

H. When Peter and Paul knew their death was near, they gave particular attention to getting their teaching put into written form and making sure it got into the hands of the churches:

1. 2 Pet. 1:12-15 -- Peter diligently writes these things down so that after he has died they will be able to be reminded of what he taught them, so that it will not slip away from them. They will have a written record to refer to, to renew their awareness of what the apostles had taught by inspiration.
2. 2 Pet. 3:1-2 -- second letter I am writing to you...by way of reminder...remember the words spoken by...prophets...apostles (he wrote those things down so that it could not be lost or forgotten after the apostles and prophets died). If this is not a claim to inspired scripture, then there never was one!
3. Heb. 2:1-4 -- Paul writing just after he had been released from Roman prison, urges them to pay much closer attention to the things that the apostles had taught, since they were backed up by miraculous confirmation. He is writing to Jewish Christians who were

being tempted to forsake Christ and go back into Judaism. This written apology for Jewish Christians was of such high character that the early church accepted it as canonical even though its authorship was unclear. Here Paul was in his final days before he was martyred, making sure his finest teaching was put in written form before his lamp was snuffed out.

4. 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2; 4:6 -- Paul knows the time of his death has arrived. He instructs Timothy to hold onto the pattern of sound words that he had heard from Paul and entrust these things to faithful men who would be able to teach others also. Paul has written all of those things down in his epistles, which Timothy had read and copied and distributed for him. (cf. Rom. 6:17 - "form of teaching")

I. Used That Authority To Not Only Decide Which Books Were Canonical, but also which ones were not:

1. 2 Thess. 2:2 – that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or **a letter as if from us...**
2. (cf. 2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Jn. 10; 1 Jn. 2:26; 3 Jn. 9-10)

J. Evidence That They Actually Collected The Canonical Books

1. 2 Tim. 4:11 -- Paul instructs Timothy to **pick up Mark** and bring him to Paul, because Paul needs his services (useful to me for service). We know what services Mark provided for Peter. And Luke was there with Paul providing those same writing services for Paul. How was Paul planning to use Mark and Luke. This becomes even more intriguing when we read the next two verses where Paul instructs Timothy to bring the books and parchments with him.
2. 2 Tim. 4:13 -- Paul instructs Timothy to **bring the books** (Gr. BIBLIA) and the **parchments** (Gr. MEMBRANAS) that he left with Carpus in Troas. What books and parchments are these? And what does he plan to do with them in this final hour of his life on earth? And why does Paul want Mark and Timothy to join him and Luke there in Rome?

K. Evidence That They Put Their Seal of Authenticity and Authority On Them

1. 2 Thess. 3:17 – I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a **distinguishing mark** in every letter; this is the way I write.
2. Gal. 6:11 – See with what **large letters** I am writing to you with my own hand
3. 2 Pet. 3:15-16 – ...our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, **wrote to you**, as also **in all his letters**, speaking in them of **these things**, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the **rest of the Scriptures**, to their own destruction.
4. 1 Pet. 5:12 – Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard *him*), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that **this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!**
5. 2 Pet. 1:16-21 – For we **did not follow cleverly devised tales** when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were **eyewitnesses** of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”— and we ourselves **heard this utterance** made from heaven when we

were with Him on the holy mountain. So **we have the prophetic word made more sure**, to which you do well to **pay attention** as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that **no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation**, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but **men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God**.

- L. Evidence that the completion of the canon occurred while the apostles were still alive, and that they were conscious of the fact that their canonical task had been faithfully completed:
1. Jude 3 – "once for all delivered to the saints" (the similarities between Jude and 2 Peter show that they were written very close in time to each other) So Peter was aware of Jude's statement and in agreement with it. Peter thus certified the gospel as having been fully delivered.
  2. Rev. 22:18-19 – nothing can be added to or taken away from this final revelation.

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