



Lesson 3 Part 2  
The Word of God

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with  
God, and the Word was God.

- John 1:1 -

**FINDING THE ROCK – MEMBERSHIP 101**  
**LESSON THREE: PART 2**  
**THE BIBLE – GOD’S WORD**

**VII. ABOUT THE WORD “CANON”**

The word “canon” comes from the Greek word that means “a measuring rule” or “straight bar,” and possibly from a Hebrew word “qaneh,” which means “a rod.” In time, the word canon began to take on the meaning of an accepted list of scriptures.

The Hebrew Old Testament canon was settled prior to the coming of Christ. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Israel in 1947 gave us copies of the Old Testament scriptures that were dated about 1,000 years earlier than copies that existed at that time. .

To be part of the accepted canon, the books had to be historically accurate and authoritative – that is, that God was speaking through the individual, or the individual was speaking for God, and in agreement with the other books.

The canon of the Old and New Testaments was recognized as being the only books to be read in the churches at the church council of Laodicea in 363 A.D.

Basically there were three primary criteria that had to be met in order for books to be recognized as authoritative:

1. Had to be written by an apostle, or someone directly connected or in contact with the apostles.
2. Had to conform to the “rule of faith” – basic orthodox Christian beliefs as practiced and accepted among the majority of the churches.
3. Had to be widely accepted and read continuously in the majority of the churches.

(See Carson, D.A., *Collected Writings on Scripture*, Crossway, 2010)

**VIII. HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT CAME TO US<sup>1</sup>**

Luke begins his gospel by telling us that, “*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us,*” (Luke 1:1). Obviously, there were many accounts of the life of Jesus written down, but over time four of the “gospels” that were copied and circulated and began to be recognized as authoritative by the apostles, and by the churches at large. In addition to the gospels, the book of Acts, the 13 letters of Paul, 1 Peter, and 1 John were accepted as being inspired scripture early on. Christians desired to copy the latest letter from the Apostles and so copies abounded.

Later adopted usage of cursive Greek script (as opposed to Uncial – all capital letters) made copying manuscripts much quicker. The use of individual parchment scrolls gave way to the use of the “codex” – essentially not unlike a modern book, it was glued or bound on one edge, and thus enabled a collection of writings to be held together in one place. Christians adopted the use of the codex and more and more copies began to be in circulation among the churches.

Early (Patristic) evidence for the existence of widely accepted scriptures is found in the letter of 1 Clement – dated around 90 A.D. The letter quotes from both the Old and New Testaments without any introductory formula. The letter refers to the four gospels as we know them today, Acts, 1 Corinthians, Philipians, Titus, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and possibly James. In another letter, 2 Clement, which is dated around the end of the first century, occurs an early usage (perhaps the earliest) of the term *scripture* in citing a *New Testament* passage – namely, Mark 2:17.

<sup>1</sup> See: D A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, ©2005)

As far as lists of the accepted books of the New Testament, one of the earliest was that of Marcion around 140 A.D., who was a heretic, but nonetheless, his “list” of books is important from a historical perspective.

The Muratorian fragment dated near the end of the second century A.D. contains a list of New Testament books. Although the first part of the fragment is mutilated, it evidently speaks of the four gospels – Matthew and Mark are missing, but they are inferred because the fragment says Luke is the “third” gospel, and then it speaks of John. It also mentions Acts, Paul’s nine letters to churches and four individual letters (Philemon, Titus, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy), Jude, two Epistles of John, and the Apocalypse of John and Peter.

Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, writing about 115 A.D. speaks of “the gospel” – in other words a singular story, although he knew of other “gospels” from other writers, and this seems to indicate the acceptance of one story of the gospel, but told by various authors. He may have been referring to the four gospels in his use of the term.

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, in his writing “Against Heresies” (dated c. 175-185 A.D.), in Book 3.11.8, describes the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as the “four-formed gospel” and likens them to the four-faced cherubim upon which the Word sits enthroned and says that “it is not possible that the gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are.” In Book 3.2.8, Irenaeus writes, “For as there are four quarters of the world in which we live, and four universal winds, and as the Church is dispersed over all the earth, and the gospel is the pillar and base of the Church and the breath of life, so it is natural that it should have four pillars, breathing immortality from every quarter and kindling the life of men anew. Whence it is manifest that the Word, the architect of all things, who sits upon the cherubim and holds all things together, having been manifested to men, has given us the gospel in fourfold form, but held together by one Spirit.”

The Paschal (Passover/Easter Season) letter of Athanasius in 367 A.D. contains the exact list of New Testament books we have today.

## IX. ASPECTS OF THE WORD OF GOD

*And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. 1 Thessalonians 2:13*

In the scripture above, the Word of God:

Is a \_\_\_\_\_ Message – “the Word of God...not the word of men.”

Involves a \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Partnership – God spoke through men.

Is an \_\_\_\_\_ Message – The Thessalonians accepted the Word through Paul as the Word of God.

Is a \_\_\_\_\_ Message – The Word “worked” in those who believed.

Is an \_\_\_\_\_ Message – again, because it is “working”...The truth of the Word of God is attested to by the Spirit – “*the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.*” Romans 8:16

*Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and **the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word** by the signs that accompanied it. (emphasis added) Mark 16:20*

## X. PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THIS LESSON – THE “TAKE AWAY”

1. The WORD is “spirit and life” to a \_\_\_\_\_.

*The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. John 6:63*

2. We are told to study the Word of God.

*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15*

3. The Word of God is \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ (inspired) and is profitable for certain purposes in the life of the believer.

*and how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:15-17*

4. The Old Testament scriptures are just as \_\_\_\_\_ as New Testament scriptures.

*These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. 1 Corinthians 10:11*

*For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. Romans 15:4*

5. The Old Testament \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ.

*Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. Luke 24:25-27*

6. Jesus said (quoting the Old Testament) man was to \_\_\_\_\_ by the Word of God.

*Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4*

7. The scriptures were \_\_\_\_\_ by Holy men of God as they were moved or carried along by the Holy Spirit.

*We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

*2 Peter 1:16-21*

8. The objective truth in the Word of God is the standard for our lives, not our own feelings, societal norms and mores.

9. Meditating on God's Word will bring success in His purposes and work in your life.

*Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Joshua 1:8*

10. Teachers of the Word and the Word that they teach are NECESSARY in the life of a believer.

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42*

*Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. 1 Timothy 4:15, 16*

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. Ephesians 4:11-15*

**Answers:**

Pg. 2 – divine, human-divine, accepted, transforming, attested, believer

Pg. 3 – God-breathed, valuable, speaks, live, written

# MEMBERSHIP 101 CLASS 3 HOMEWORK

1) WRITE OUT 2 TIMOTHY 3:16

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2) GIVE A SCRIPTURE REFERENCE THAT SHOWS THAT JESUS IS ALSO CALLED "THE WORD OF GOD."

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3) HOW MANY BOOKS ARE THERE IN THE PROTESTANT (I.E. NOT THE CATHOLIC, EPISCOPAL, OR ORTHODOX) BIBLE?  
(CIRCLE THE ANSWER(S))

25                      39                      66                      27                      72

4) ABOUT HOW MANY COPIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS ARE IN EXISTENCE TODAY?

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5) LIST THE BASIC "DIVISIONS" OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT:

- A) \_\_\_\_\_
- B) \_\_\_\_\_
- C) \_\_\_\_\_
- D) \_\_\_\_\_
- E) \_\_\_\_\_

6) EXPLAIN WHY THE BIBLE IS IMPORTANT TO YOU AS A CHRISTIAN. WHY SHOULD YOU READ AND STUDY YOUR BIBLE DAILY? GIVE SCRIPTURES TO SUPPORT.

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