*Session 3*

*How We Got the Bible*

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

1. **The Bible as “Canon”**

“canon” writings considered sacred by a worshiping community from Greek *kanon* a line or rule

Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, in AD 367. The Bible came to be the “rule of faith” of the church, the measuring line that determines orthodoxy.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274): “Canonical scripture alone is the rule of faith.”

How we got the Bible:

* + - 1. **Events**
      2. **Oral traditions**
      3. **Writing**
      4. **Collecting**
      5. **Editing**
      6. **Set Text**
      7. **Copying and Distribution**
      8. **Canonizing**
      9. **Copying and distribution of the manuscripts**
      10. **Translations**
      11. **Translation into English or other modern languages**
      12. **Various new modern versions in English or other modern translations**

1. **The Old Testament as Canon**
2. **The Old Testament as the Hebrew Scripture**

established by the time of Jesus confirmed by AD 90 and the Jewish Council of Jamnia,

*TaNaK*

* 1. ***Torah*** or Law: the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
  2. ***Nebiim*** or Prophets:
     1. Former: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings.
     2. Latter: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Book of the Twelve (“Minor Prophets”)
  3. ***Ketubim*** or Writings: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the five called the *Megilloth* or scrolls: Song of Solomon, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Lamentations; Daniel; Ezra-Nehemiah as one book.

1. **The Septuagint** (abbreviation LXX “70”)

second century BC

Greek translation of the OT

Alexandria, Egypt

The Bible of the Greek speaking world

1. **Apocrypha**

Added books called the Apocrypha (“hidden” or “concealed”)

1 Esdras

Judith

Tobit

1 Maccabees

2 Maccabees

3 Maccabees

4 Maccabees

Wisdom of Solomon

Wisdom of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)

Baruch

Letter of Jeremiah

1. **Christian Canonization of the OT**
2. **Early Years**

Melito of Sardis (AD 170) *Paschal Homily*

Origen (185-254) *Hexapla*

Jerome (347-420) Latin Vulgate

Augustine (354-430)

1. **Protestant Reformation**

Martin Luther *sola scriptura* “Scripture alone”: Scripture and not the church forms the basis of faith and doctrine

What is Scripture?

Protestants: Apocrypha as appendix and then dropped out

Catholic Council of Trent 1545-46 kept Apocrypha

1. **Transition to 39 books**

Apocrypha rejected by Westminster Assembly of 1647

Today no universal agreement

1. **Why only 39 books?**
2. They are undisputed
3. They add nothing to the message of the Bible
4. Their authority has long been disputed among Christians
5. Jewish traditions included only the 39 books
6. Neither Jesus nor any of the NT writers assumed the Apocrypha as authoritative
7. **The Canonization of the New Testament**
8. **The Process of Development**
9. Letters (50's - 60's)
10. The first generation of Christians began to die (60's)
11. Gospels:
    1. The disciples heard Jesus’ teachings as eyewitnesses.
    2. The teachings were retold orally in the preaching of the early church.
    3. The teachings took on a set form and may have been begun to be written down.
    4. The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) collected these teachings and were written for specific audiences or purposes.
12. Broader Reflections: Acts, Revelation, Hebrews.
13. Preservation and Copying: criteria for acceptance:
    1. Apostolic Origins
    2. Earliness
    3. Usefulness to the church
    4. Conformity to “orthodoxy”
14. Collecting

Copying, exchanging, and spreading of documents

1. The Role of Marcion (ca 100-160)

First to form a canon

Rejected the Old Testament and Judaism

Condemned as a Gnostic

1. Reaction of the church

Accepted the OT

Earliest authoritative list “Muratorian Fragment,” the end of the second century.

1. Other books were often cited but not universally accepted.
2. Origen (185-254) gave three categories:
   * + 1. Acknowledged (4 Gospels, 13 letters of Paul, 1 Peter, 1 John, Acts, Revelation)
       2. Disputed (2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Hebrews, James, Jude)
       3. False
3. Eusebius (260/265 – 339/340):
   * + 1. Universally Accepted (all except the following)
       2. Disputed (James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John)
       3. Spurious or non-canonical (Acts of Paul, Shepherd, Apocalypse of Peter, Didache, Gospel of Hebrews, etc.)
4. The New Testament Apocrypha (many heretical)
   * + - * Gospels (nativity / infancy, sayings, passion, post-resurrection)
         * Acts
         * Letters (“epistle”)
         * Apocalypses

1945 at Nag Hammadi Library in upper Egypt.

1. **Confirming the Canon**

First official recognition of the 27 books 357 AD.

367 Thirty-ninth Easter Letter of Athanasius

Jerome’s translation into Latin, the Vulgate

397, the Third Council of Carthage in Africa declared the 27 books as canon.

Article IV in the Nazarene *Manual* follows the Westminster Confession in what is accepted as canon:

We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, by which we understand the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation, so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith.

1. **How does this affect interpretation?**

To have common theology and doctrine, we must start from the same place.

For our theology and doctrine to be orthodox, we must agree with what the church has identified as its standard: the Bible.

**Big Ideas**

1. The canonizing process of the Bible was complex but God was in each step.
2. The Hebrew Old Testament was translated into the Greek Septuagint in the second century B.C.
3. The books of the New Testament were recognized early as authoritative in different Christian communities and later joined together into a collection.
4. As Nazarenes, we accept only the 66 books of the Bible and not the Apocrypha as authoritative.
5. It is crucial that we accept the same set of writings as Scripture in order to maintain doctrinal unity.