

Are There Other Inspired Books?

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INTRODUCTION

In **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, the apostle Paul wrote, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God."* The American Standard Version translates this phrase, *"Every Scripture inspired of God."* Both emphasize that the Scriptures did not come from man or from the minds of men, but came forth from the mouth of God. The Greek word *theopneustos* translated by the phrase, "given by inspiration of God" literally means "God-breathed" or "God-inspired." It indicates the concept that God breathed *out of* His mouth the Scriptures and thus it emphasizes that God is the source or origin of the Scriptures. The fact that the Scriptures came forth from the mouth of God also shows that inspiration is verbal. God did not just give the inspired writers the thoughts He wished to reveal and leave them to choose their own words. He gave them the very words to write (1 Corinthians 2:13).

The word *"All"* in the King James Version and *"Every"* in the American Standard Version both point to the extent of inspiration: it is full or complete. Every word of the Scriptures or all of the Scriptures are inspired of God. There is not one word that is superfluous or insignificant. All must be included and none excluded, lest one suffer from the punishment of God for adding to or taking away from His Word (Revelation 22:18-19).

In **Jude 3**, we find the significant truth that the Scriptures would not be continuously revealed. Jude wrote, that we should, *"...earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."* The phrase *"the faith"* contemplated here is not the subjective faith in the heart of the Christian, but the objective faith or the Gospel system of salvation revealed in the New Testament. It is used here in the same way that Paul used it in **Galatians 1:23** where he referred to himself as preaching *"...the faith which once he destroyed."* Thus, it is used to refer to God's revelation of His plan of salvation in the New Testament. Jude teaches here that it *"was once delivered"* (past tense in English, aorist tense in Greek) *"unto the saints."* The phrase *"once delivered"* shows that the New Testament, the faith, was once and for all time delivered to the saints at the time Jude penned this epistle.

This shows that God's revelation to man would not be continuous or on going through out the ages until the end of time. There would come a time, and Jude indicates it had come, when there would be no more inspired revelation from God. The faith was once delivered and that closed God's revelation to mankind. If that is the case, and if it is the case that all Scripture is inspired of God, then it must follow that God's revelation to man, the inspired Scriptures, are limited to a

certain, finite, identifiable number of words, to which one cannot add or take away without suffering the vengeance of God (Revelation 22:18-19).

Knowing these truths should impress upon us the great importance of understanding exactly what is included and excluded from the inspired Word of God. Many people accept without investigation that there are sixty-six books in the Bible: thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament and that these constitute all of God's inspired Word. However, there are several religious groups which teach that there are other books in addition to the sixty-six books of the Bible which should be considered with equal authority to the Bible, since they claim they are also inspired of God. So how can we know for certain which books are inspired of God and which books are merely the works of man?

This brings us to the consideration of our assigned topic for this lesson: "Are There Other Inspired Books?" By this we mean, are there other inspired books in addition to the Bible? The consideration of this question leads to the topic of the canon of the Bible and which books should be included and excluded as God's inspired Word. This is not a matter which can be taken lightly, since the salvation of our souls and others depends upon the right answer.

In this study, we shall examine this question from a three-fold perspective: (1) The definition of terms, so we can understand what we are talking about; (2) Some books which claim to be inspired in addition to the Bible; and (3) The canon of the Bible, or why we believe the sixty-six books of the Bible constitute all of God's inspired and revealed Word to mankind today.

I. DEFINITION OF TERMS

There are at least three words which we need to define in order to be able to effectively deal with this subject. They are: (1) Canon; (2) Apocrypha; and (3) Pseudepigrapha. These are words which are not commonly used and they may sound somewhat complex, but in fact their definitions are easy to understand in this connection.

- A. Canon** — The word *canon* comes from a root word meaning *reed*. In English it is derived from the word, *cane*; in Hebrew from the word *ganeh*; and in Greek from *kanon*. The significance of it is that the reed or cane was used as a measuring rod and thus it came to refer to a "standard" by which things could be measured.

A third century church father, Origen, used the word "canon to denote what we call the 'rule of faith,' the standard by which we are to measure and evaluate." In later usage, the word was used to refer to a "list" or "index" (Bruce 95). As the word *canon* is used to refer to the Bible, it means "an officially accepted list of books" (Earle 31). According to Unger, "Athanasias (c. A.D. 350) was the first person known, with certainty, to apply the term to sacred Scripture. Thereafter the concept became general, both in the Greek and Latin churches" (Unger 174).

In simple terms, the canon of the Scriptures includes those books and only those books which came from God or are inspired of God. Those which are of man's origin are not included in the canon, while those inspired of God and only those inspired of God are included in the canon.

It is important for us to understand that no matter what man or a group of men decide what should or should not be included in their respective canon(s), God is the One who determined the canon of the Scriptures. The canon of the Scriptures was being formed during the apostolic period. The church or church fathers did not determine which books are God's Word and which aren't. Instead the church recognized or discovered which books were inspired of God and which books were not inspired of God. It has been stated, "a book is not the Word of God because it is accepted by the people of God. Rather, it was accepted by the people of God because it is the Word of God. That is, God gives the book its divine authority, not the people of God. They merely recognize the divine authority which God gives to it" (Geisler/Nix 210).

There are several tests, which have been determined through the years for whether a book should or should not be included in the canon of the Scriptures, but the most important test it must pass is the proof that it is inspired of God. If we can determine that those books found in the sixty-six books of the Bible are the only books inspired of God, then we can affirm with certainty that all others are not to be included in the canon of the Scripture, because they are not inspired of God. Further, the fact that the inspiration of God which produced His revelation to man was not to be continuous, but ended at a certain time in the first century, proves that those books produced at later dates claiming to be inspired are not inspired of God.

B. Apocrypha — The word *apocrypha* comes from the transliterated Greek word *apokryphos*, which comes from the root Greek word *krypto*. It is defined as, secret, hidden or concealed. There are at least three ways that this word is used in reference to religious writings:

1. It is sometimes used to refer to books and writings that are or have been rarely seen. They, or the meaning of these books, are hidden, rare, or kept secret from most people. This seems to be how the word was used among some of the early church fathers (2nd-5th cent.) as they used it to refer to the *apocalyptic* books which had signs, symbols, numbers and highly figurative language in them. They viewed the interpretation of them as being hidden from most people or secret.
2. The word was also used to describe books and writings which were not accepted in the canon of Scripture by many in the religious world because of their doubtful authorship or they were clearly not inspired of God. They were deemed hidden because of their lack of use as God's Word. Thus, they

were banned as being authentic or authoritative by many notable church fathers.

3. The word *apocrypha* is also used by the Roman Catholic church to refer to a group of fourteen books which they include in the canon of Scripture. These books were written by men during what is often called the period “between the Testaments” or the “four hundred silent years” from Malachi to Matthew. They are called the *deuterocanonical* books by the Catholic church. These are generally classified as the “Old Testament Apocrypha” since there is another group classified as the “New Testament Apocrypha” which were written during the first century and deal with similar themes as the Gospel accounts.

- C. **Pseudepigrapha** — This word comes from a compound Greek word made up of *pseudo* meaning *false* and *epigrapha* meaning *writings* or *inscribed*. Thus, they are false writings or falsely inscribed writings. The reason these are set apart from the apocryphal writings is because these were works which were produced by men and then falsely signed or attributed to other Biblical characters and Biblical times than which they were written. Thus, they are false, spurious books which have never been accepted as canonical by anyone, even the Roman Catholic church. Because of the strong opposition of Protestant religious groups against the Roman Catholic acceptance of the apocrypha into the canon, the two terms became synonymous, meaning that they were uncanonical works. However, the main difference has to do with the honesty of those who wrote them. Some call them the “lost books” of the Bible, but there is really no such thing.

II. SOME BOOKS WHICH CLAIM INSPIRATION

There are a number of religious groups which believe they have other inspired books in addition to the Bible and they claim these other books are just as authoritative, if not more so, than the sixty-six books of the Bible. Their concept of the canon or their list of so-called authoritative and inspired Scriptures is much different than the Bible only. We wish to examine some of these and show they are not inspired of God and should not be accepted as canonical.

- A. **The Talmud** — Some Jews believe that the canon includes only the books of the Old Testament, while some Jews believe that it contains the books of the Old Testament plus the Talmud. However, both groups reject the New Testament as being in their canon.

The Talmud is an ancient “collection of rabbinical laws, law decisions and comments on the laws of Moses” that preserves the oral tradition of the Jewish people (White 589). There are several collections of the Talmud which were published at various times and given names for the places where they were composed. One version of the Talmud was written in Jerusalem from A.D.

350-425 and is called the Jerusalem Talmud. Another more extensive copy was compiled in Babylon about A.D. 500 and is called the Babylonian Talmud. It should be clear from the dates and revisions that these are not inspired of God, but are the comments and opinions of men.

One Jewish scholar called the books of the Talmud, “the books of the heretics” and stated, “the books of Ben Sira and whatever books have been written since his time are not canonical” (Pfeiffer 63). Most Jewish scholars do not consider the Talmud as part of the canon and do not include it in their list of inspired books (Beckwith 370).

- B. The Apocrypha** — The Roman Catholic church added fourteen additional books to their canon at the council of Trent in 1546 and they have been published in the Catholic versions of the Bible. They are generally known as the Apocrypha or the books written mostly during the inter-Testament period. A list of these apocryphal books included in the Catholic Bible are: First Esdras (c. 150 B.C.); Second Esdras (A.D. 100); Tobit (early 2nd century B.C.); Judith (middle 2nd century B.C.); Additions to Esther (c. 100 B.C.); The Wisdom of Solomon (c. A.D. 40); Ecclesiasticus or Wisdom of Sirach (c. 180 B.C.); Baruch (c. A.D. 100); Susanna (1st century B.C.); Bel and the Dragon (1st century B.C.); The Song of the Three Hebrew Children (c. 300 B.C.); The Prayer of Manasseh (2nd century B.C.); First Maccabees (1st century B.C.) and Second Maccabees (1st century B.C.).

Most of these books deal with some interesting history of the Jewish people, but even a brief study will show that they are not inspired and should not be included in the canon of the Scriptures. They contain doctrinal, moral, geographical and chronological errors which cannot be reconciled with the truth of the Bible.

1. Wisdom of Solomon 11:17 has the world created out of “formless matter.”
2. 2 Maccabees 1:13-16 and 2 Maccabees 9:19-29 contradict about the death of Antiochus Epiphanes.
3. Wisdom of Solomon 8:19-20 teaches the pre-existence of the soul and a body selected to match it.
4. 2 Maccabees 12:45 teaches to pray for the dead for the forgiveness of their sins.
5. Tobit 3:9 teaches that giving of alms delivers from death and purges one from sins.
6. 2 Mac. 14:41-43 suggests suicide is a noble way to die.

7. Tobit 6:1-7 encourages the use of magical potions to drive away demons.

From some of these teachings, such as prayer for the dead and giving alms to forgive sins, it can be seen why the Catholic church might want to include it in their canon, but it is clear that it contradicts not only the Bible, but itself and should not be accepted. None of the books of the Apocrypha were ever quoted as Scripture by Jesus or the inspired writers of the New Testament. Further there was great opposition to it by many of the early church fathers and even in the Catholic church until the council of Trent in 1546 (Geisler/Nix 272-273).

- C. **Mormon Books** — The Mormons have four additional books added to the King James Version of the Bible which they accept in their canon: the book of Mormon, the book of Abraham, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. These are books which were written mostly by Joseph Smith and later by other Mormon church leaders as doctrinal guide books. Mormons will use the Bible as a way to introduce themselves and begin their study, but they believe that their other books are of higher authority than the Bible and will openly criticize those who accept only the Bible as the Word of God (2 Nephi 29:3-10).

Mormons believe that the Book of Mormon is inspired of God and a volume of holy scripture comparable to the Bible. Joseph Smith claimed that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, the keystone of our religion and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book. Mormon Article of Faith #8 states, "We believe the Bible to be the Word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God." D&C 20:9 states their belief that the Book of Mormon contains the fullness of the Gospel. However, the book of Mormon and the other Mormon books contain doctrinal and grammatical errors and contradictions which prove they cannot be inspired of God.

1. The 1830 edition of the book of Mormon was riddled with grammatical errors, such as, "Adam and Eve, which **was** our first parents." These indicate that the one who wrote it was poorly educated. This is a major problem for Mormon church leaders such as Brigham H. Roberts who stated that the plates from which Joseph Smith translated were received by the power of God and "they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them is correct" (1:54-55). The Mormon church "cleaned up" Joseph Smith's mistakes in later editions.
2. 1 Nephi 18:12 has the Nephites with a compass about 550 B.C., which wasn't invented until c. A.D. 1100.
3. Alma 7:10 foretells Jesus as being born in Jerusalem, instead of Bethlehem.

4. 2 Nephi 25:19 has Nephi using the phrase “Jesus Christ, the Son of God” almost 600 B.C. But the name Jesus was given to Joseph and Mary much later (Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:31).
5. Alma 27:27 mentions those who were “firm in the faith of Christ” and Alma 46:13-16 calls them “Christians” in the “church of Christ” almost 200 years before Jesus built His church which contradicts the book of Mormon (Mosiah 18:17) and the Bible (Matthew 16:18; Acts 11:26).
6. 1 Nephi 11:18,21 calls Mary the “mother of God” in the 1830 edition, but again it was revised by the Mormons to read, “the mother of the Son of God.”

These types of errors and absurdities could be multiplied many times over, but these are enough to prove that the book of Mormon is not inspired of God and all the other Mormon books which are based on the book of Mormon fall with it as being mere books of man.

- D. Christian Science** — In Christian Science an additional book was added by Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Christian Science religion, to their canon besides the Bible. It is called Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures and was first published in 1875 when she was fifty-four years old. She claimed that it was the final revelation of God to mankind and asserted that her work was inspired of God. The word “Key” in the title of her book is a reference to her being the woman of Revelation 12 and her claim was that she was the key to unlocking the Bible, which she considered to be a dark book. She believed the Bible had many mistakes and that her writings provided the “key” spoken of in Revelation 3:7.

However, her writings do not “unlock” the Bible, but are contrary to the truth of God found in the Bible in many places. They reflect the beliefs of a person who was obsessed with physical healing through control of the mind, as she believed the mind only could heal the body. Here are some of the incredible quotes one will find in her writings:

1. “His disciples believed Jesus to be dead while he was hidden in the sepulcher, whereas he was alive...” (S&H 44:28-29).
2. Of the creation of man of the dust of the ground, she wrote, “Is this addition to His creation real or unreal? Is it the truth, or is it a lie concerning a man and God? It must be a lie, for God presently curses the ground...” (S&H 524:13-27).
3. “...and recognize that Jesus Christ is not God, as Jesus himself declared, but is the Son of God.” (S&H 361:11-13).

Obviously her “key” won't fit the lock in unlocking the truth of the Bible and certainly any work which is so full of error cannot be inspired of God, as she claimed.

- E. The Qur'an** — In Islam, or the Muslim religion, the Qur'an is believed to be the inspired book of God and accepted on a higher level of authority than the Bible, which is relegated to more or less a history book. In 610 A.D., while he slept, Muhammad claimed that the angel Gabriel came to him in a vision and commanded him to repeat a phrase, which was supposedly his “first” revelation. At the age of 40, Muhammad assumed the title, “Apostle of God” and declared that he was commissioned to preach the message: “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his Prophet.” About four years later he preached in Mecca about his visions and the receiving of his revelations.

If the Qur'an contradicts itself, then Muhammad cannot be a prophet of God and the Qur'an cannot be the Word of God. Let us examine some of the contradictions of the Qur'an with itself. One contradiction is enough to prove that it is not the Word of God!

1. Creation of man and animals — (21:30-33) says, “And we made every living thing of water.” while (23:12-14) says, “We created man from a quintessence of wet clay...”
2. Days of creation — (10:3) says 6 days, while (41:9-12) relates it in 8 days.
3. The definition of a Day: (32:5) says, “..a Day, whereof the measure is a thousand years..” while (70:4) says, “..a Day, whereof the span is fifty thousand years.”
4. The direction of prayer: (2:115) says East or West or any direction, while (2:144) says one must turn toward the “Inviolable Place of Worship” which is defined as the Kabah in Mecca.
5. The first to turn to God. (6:14) says, “..I am ordered to be the first to surrender (unto Him). And be not thou (O Muhammad) of the idolaters.” while (7:143) says of Moses, “..I turn unto thee repentant, and I am the first of (true) believers.”

Of course, these are not all of the contradictions, but they are enough to show that the Qur'an cannot be the Word of God, according to Muslim standards or Biblical standards.

There are many other books of Eastern religion, as well as the manuals, catechisms and creeds of denominationalism which may not be considered to be inspired, but which will often be accepted above the Word of God revealed in the Bible. We have merely touched on a few of the

major books considered to be inspired of God to show that they do not meet the standard and should not be considered as God's Word for man today.

III. THE CANON OF THE BIBLE

It should be clear why we do not accept these other books as inspired of God. But, why do we accept the sixty-six books of the Bible as inspired of God? Have you ever wondered, why that number? Why not more or less? There is ample evidence why we consider only the sixty-six books of the Bible to be inspired of God.

- A. Tests of Canonicity** — There are essentially five tests which a document should pass before it is considered as part of the canon of the Scriptures (Pledge 83-85):
1. **Inspiration** — Did the document come from God or did it come from man? Edward J. Young stated a very important fact in this regard, "The criterion of a book's canonicity, therefore, is its inspiration. If a book has been inspired of God, it is canonical, whether accepted by men as such or not. It is God and not man who determines whether a book is to belong to the canon. Therefore, if a certain writing has indeed been the product of divine inspiration, it belongs in the canon from the moment of its composition." (Young 38)
 2. **Written or endorsed by a spokesman of God** — Any writing that was not written by one of God's spokesman (one who obviously lived at the time indicated and was confirmed as a messenger of God's will to man by miracles, signs and wonders, Heb. 2:3-4) could not truly lay claim to being inspired. Therefore, we would understand that the human writers who penned the New Testament would have lived during the time period in which they wrote and would have borne the signs that they were speaking for God.
 3. **Proved to be genuine** — This test has to do with the human writer. Is it possible for us to find out who wrote it or, if not the writer, can we determine that it contains the same matter that it did when it was first written? The books of the N.T. all offer, in different degrees internal evidence of their human writers. Many books clearly state the human writer in their salutation or there is mention of such later in them.
 4. **An authentic book** — Authenticity has to do with whether or not the book contains facts which are verifiable. Of course, this does not mean that every document which is authentic is inspired of God. Some of the apocryphal accounts are factual, but they are not included in the canon of God's Word, because they do not meet some of the other tests for canonicity, such as inspiration and endorsement by spokesmen of God.

5. **The testimony of those who lived in or close to the time of writing** — This deals with those who would, perhaps, know best these other factors. Obviously, someone who lived in the 1st or 2nd century and/or witnessed the miracles of Jesus and the apostles (or knew those who did) and then read the Gospel accounts or epistles, would be in a better position to testify of the canonicity of a book, than someone who lived in the 18th, 19th or 20th century and was steeped in European rationalism. However, one could not accept this alone as a conclusive test.

- B. **Old Testament Canon** — In **Romans 15:4**, the apostle Paul alludes to the Old Testament Scriptures, *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”* This shows that the Old Testament Scriptures were recognized and identifiable by the New Testament saints.

In **Luke 24:44** Jesus recognized that the Old Testament Scriptures were divided into three areas: The law, the prophets and the psalms. He said, *“...all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”*

The Jews recognized these three divisions and called them: The Law (Torah), The Prophets (Nebhiim), and The Writings (Kethubhim). The Jews divided the Old Testament into twenty-two books. This differs from the thirty-nine books and the way we divide them now as: Law (Pentateuch), History, Poetry and Prophecy. Nevertheless, the difference is only in the fact that they counted the twelve minor prophets as one book; Samuel, Kings and Chronicles as one book each; Ezra and Nehemiah together and Judges and Ruth together. If we take this into account, we end up with exactly the same number.

- C. **New Testament Canon** — In **John 14:16-17** and **John 15:26-27**, Jesus promised the apostles that He would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to them and they would bear witness because they had been with Him from the beginning.

In **John 16:13**, Jesus told the apostles, *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”* Notice the phrase *“all truth”* — not some, not much, not even most truth, but they would be guided by the Holy Spirit into **ALL** truth. It is clear from this that inspiration would be limited to those of the first century who received this body of truth. This rules out continuous revelation through out the ages or latter day revelations.

But, how could one tell which men were inspired of God? First, the promise of the Holy Spirit was given and received only by the apostles (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:26-2:4). Second, the Lord confirmed them as His messengers by miracles. **Mark 16:20** says,

“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” In other words, they were confirmed as the true messengers of God by the signs which they worked by the power of God in the presence of others.

Hebrews 2:2-4 also ties together the Old Testament and New Testament canon and shows that the miracles of the inspired writers confirmed that they were God's spokesmen and their writings should be accepted as God's Word. *“For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; 3. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; 4. God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”*

As we have already noted, **2 Tim. 3:16-17** implies that the Scriptures are inspired of God and are limited to a number of identifiable books, through which we can be *“perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”* Further we know from **Jude 3** that God's revelation in the New Testament *“the faith”* was complete and *“was once delivered unto the saints”* (aorist tense, completed action) by the time Jude penned this epistle during the first century.

There is more than adequate evidence that all twenty-seven books of the New Testament are inspired of God and we have more historical evidence for their authenticity than any other ancient book or manuscript. There are over 5,300 manuscript copies of either the complete New Testament text or various parts of it in fragments and readings. There are over 19,000 versions of the New Testament books in other languages and there are over 36,000 quotes of the New Testament by the early church fathers. We have more textual evidence for the authenticity and reliability of the Greek text and the various versions translated from it, than for any other ancient document. Further, the dates are closer to the originals than most ancient historical documents.

CONCLUSION

In this study we have considered and demonstrated some of the reasons why some other books which are believed by some in the religious world to be inspired of God are not inspired of God and therefore should be excluded from the canon of Scripture. We have also examined only a small fraction of the internal and external evidence available which proves that the sixty-six books of the Bible should be considered as the complete, inspired Word of God and therefore included in the canon of Scripture. Based upon these two lines of reasoning, we must conclude that the Bible only is the inspired Word of God and therefore God's complete, perfect and authoritative revelation to mankind to lead us to salvation and equip us unto every good work.

Let us do our best to study it, understand it, apply it, and teach it and preach it to others, so that we may save ourselves and those who hear us (1 Tim. 4:16). *“And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified”* (Acts 20:32).

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