

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

Peter Certified All 27 NT Books as Canonical Before He Died

by Ed Stevens (Then and Now - 3/3/13)

This is the third and final lesson in this series on apostolic canonization. Our focus will be on Peter's role in the process of producing a New Testament canon. Last time we noticed that all the NT writings were in circulation, being copied, and held as a complete collection by Peter and the church at Jerusalem.

In this lesson we want to show how Peter was the key person, not only in the process of collecting the inspired writings, but more importantly, in the certifying of them as canonical. By canonical, we mean that a document was considered to be inspired and absolutely authoritative on the same level with "the rest of the Scriptures." As we noted in past lessons, the Bible does not use the word canonical in reference to itself, but it does use language which means the same thing: inspired, word of God, word of the Lord, the Lord said, the rest of the Scriptures, all (canonical) Scripture is inspired and profitable for teaching...", revealed to me, prophecy, etc.

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? Yes, there is!

For example, 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 is a "revelation" (unveiling), and was directly revealed to John by the Holy Spirit as a book of "prophecy," Revelation is therefore a canonical book. It was written down by an inspired apostle. It uses several key words and phrases which are indicators of canonicity.

It also seems that Peter may have been aware of the book of Revelation when he wrote his first epistle (First Peter) in which he says that he was writing from the city called "Babylon" (1 Pet. 5:13). This is certainly not proof that Peter had read the book of Revelation, but it is at least proof that Peter was aware of the idea that Jerusalem was "Babylon" and was in agreement with the designation. This puts Peter's stamp of approval on the book of Revelation which teaches that same idea. Even though Apostle John's writings were inspired and therefore canonical, it is additional proof of their canonicity when Peter shows his familiarity with and approval of another apostolic document like this.

Matthew was an inspired apostle and therefore his gospel is automatically canonical. Same for John's gospel and his three short epistles. Both Mark's and Luke's gospels (also including Acts written by Luke) agree with Matthew and John, and were written under inspiration and with the full awareness and approval of both Peter and Paul. Because of this apostolic connection and approval, they are canonical.

James and Jude were brothers of Jesus, and obviously approved by Peter as being canonical. Since there are so many similarities between Jude and 2 Peter 2, it appears that Peter was not only aware of Jude and in agreement with it, but was also approving of it.

The book of Acts testifies to the close relationship of Peter and James in the church at

Jerusalem. Peter would have been aware of and had access to the epistle of James there in Jerusalem, and would have been able to censor it if it was unworthy of circulation among the churches. Note that the epistle of James was sent out to "the twelve tribes of the dispersion" (Jas 1:1), the very folks to whom Peter, James and John had been commissioned to preach (Gal 2:7-9). Gal. 2:9 settles the issue of canonicity for "James, Cephas [Peter], and John".

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)*

Notice also what Paul says about his first epistle to the Corinthians:

*Was it from you that **the word of God** first went forth? Or has it come to you only? If anyone thinks he is a **prophet** or **spiritual**, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the **Lord's commandment**. But if anyone does not **recognize this**, he is not recognized. (1 Cor. 14:36-38 NASB95)*

Paul is here clearly claiming that his writings were on a par with "the word of God" and that he was a true "prophet" and "spiritual" person. He claims that his instructions here in First Corinthians were "the Lord's commandment" and therefore absolutely authoritative -- "if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized." This would have been totally improper for him to say unless he was an inspired apostle with canonical recognition.

We should also mention what Paul says about the pillars of the Jerusalem church certifying his gospel as authoritative and commissioned by Christ (Gal. 2). Compare with the similar decisions that were made in Acts 15 and Acts 21 concerning Paul's gospel to the Gentiles.

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 a 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). 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, Paul, 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 all of Paul's epistles were indeed canonical. These three statements in Peter's second epistle clearly places his 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 one of our previous lessons in this series, we shared a list of examples from the New Testament which showed how Peter used those keys to open the doors of the Kingdom to both the circumcised and uncircumcised. We saw how Peter used that binding and loosing authority in the case of Paul to certify that the gospel preached by Paul was inspired and authoritative just like the other apostles.

Conclusion

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, and Peter especially. 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 first century 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.

This conclusion may be troubling to the Romanists and some Protestants who have compromised with the Apostolic Succession idea, but it is a great comfort to all who consider our New Testament documents the full and final authoritative revelation from our Great God and Savior, Christ Jesus our Lord.

Again, 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 seems likely that the churches of Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria did as well. However, the full and wide distribution of the canon is not necessary to the theory of apostolic canonization. All that is necessary is that Peter 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 lessons. This idea, which is a very conservative approach to the New Testament canon, needs and deserves broad consideration from the global Christian community.

One of my main sources for the dating of the various NT documents was Arthur Ogden's excellent little book, *The Development of the New Testament*. Unfortunately, it is out of print at this time (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 and canonization of all the New Testament books before AD 70, you should obtain my manuscript *First-Century Events in Chronological Order*. It can be ordered on our secure website order form at www.preterist.org. You can also get a PDF copy of all four lessons in this series by emailing me at preterist1@preterist.org. Simply request the PDF for the Apostolic Canonization series.

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.

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?

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.
 10. 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.

Before entering into the historical proof for this primitive emergence of a compact, nucleative Canon, it is pertinent to briefly examine this problem: During the formative period what principle operated in the selection of the New Testament writings and their recognition as Divine?--Theologians are divided on this point. The question of the principle that dominated the practical canonization of the New Testament Scriptures has already been discussed under (b). The faithful must have had from the beginning some realization that in the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists they had acquired a new body of Divine Scriptures, a New written Testament destined to stand side by side with the Old. The prophets, not including Daniel (which did not become part of the Hebrew canon until the synod of Jabneh, and then only as part of the Ketuvim), appear to have been "canonized" by tradition alone sometime before the 4th century B.C.E., we don't know when or how. And to all this the Christians appear to have added certain Apocrypha, although, since all Greek versions remaining are Christian, we cannot tell if any of these books had been accepted by the Alexandrian synod or were inserted later by Christians. Curiously, the first "orthodox" Christian move toward canonization begins outside the Roman Empire, in the Syrian church. Moreover, Irenaeus includes the book of Hermas as holy scripture, a part of the NT (Against All Heresies 4.20.2). XII. The NT is normally divided into four main parts (Gospels, Acts, Letters, Apocalypse), although the twenty-one "Letters" are best subdivided into three different sub-categories: I) Four "Gospels": "Good News" about Jesus Christ; authorship attributed to the four "Evangelists"; narrative portraits of Jesus written for various early Christian communities; similar to ancient biographies in form (but rather different from modern biographies!); The Synoptic Gospels: Matthew (28 / 1071 / 18345) Mark (16 / 678 / 11304) Luke (24 / 1151 / 19482). Canonization - four Gospels, several collections of letters, and a few other texts are accepted as authoritative scriptures. Apostolic Origin - attributed to and/or based on the preaching/teaching of the first-generation apostles (or their closest companions).