

Canonicity: The Old Testament Canon and the Deutero-Canonical (Apocryphal) Books

And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you. Deuteronomy 4:1-2

I. Introduction

A discussion of how to study the Bible should begin with a discussion of the Bible's trustworthiness. In addition to calling doubt on the inspiration of the Scriptures, one of the arguments often made to undercut the faith once delivered to all the saints is that the early church suppressed texts (either sets of verses attached to canonical books or other books altogether) that offered alternate histories of Jesus or alternate teachings about redemption and the life of faith. Often well-meaning Christians fail to adequately defend the Bible against such arguments or, worse, fall prey to them and begin to question the veracity of Scripture. Therefore, it is important that we consider how the Bible came down to us and why we can trust the Bible that we have. We will consider these matters in two parts. First, we will think about the Old Testament Canon and the Deutero-Canonical (Apocryphal) books, canon here meaning the list of accepted, authoritative writings. Then, in our next session, we will consider the New Testament Canon and the non-canonical books. Let's begin by recalling how we as Southern Baptists codify our belief about the Scriptures:

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation. (Baptist Faith and Message 2000, Article I: The Scriptures)

The Old Testament consists of three major divisions, a pattern which Jesus underscored in Luke 24:44, where he insisted that everything written about him **in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled**. Often in the New Testament, we see a two-part division, the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17, 7:12, 11:13 22:40; Luke 16:16, 16:29, 16:31; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; Romans 3:21), though this should not be seen as a negation of the Psalms. The Jews referred the collection of all their Scriptures by the acronym **Tanakh**, which is derived from the names of the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible: the **Torah**, which means *instruction* or *law* (Christians call this the Pentateuch), the **Nevi'im**, which means *prophets*, and the **Ketuvim**, which means *writings*. In the Hebrew Bible there were 24 books:

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| 1. Genesis | 9. Kings | 17. Song of Solomon |
| 2. Exodus | 10. Isaiah | 18. Ruth |
| 3. Leviticus | 11. Jeremiah | 19. Lamentations |
| 4. Numbers | 12. Ezekiel | 20. Ecclesiastes |
| 5. Deuteronomy | 13. Book of the Twelve | 21. Esther |
| 6. Joshua | 14. Psalms | 22. Daniel |
| 7. Judges | 15. Proverbs | 23. Ezra-Nehemiah |
| 8. Samuel | 16. Job | 24. Chronicles |

In some presentations, the Hebrew Bible was presented as 22 books, with Samuel and Kings being joined and Lamentations being attached to Jeremiah. You will notice that this list is equivalent to the Protestant Bible, despite the difference in number. Protestants separate Ezra and Nehemiah, make two books each of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, and divide the book of the twelve into the twelve minor prophets, giving the additional 15 books that comprise the Protestant Old Testament of 39 books.

The **Torah** consists of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

The **Nevi'im** consists of **the former prophets**, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, and **the latter prophets**, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve.

The **Ketuvim** consists of **the poetical books**, Psalms, Proverbs, and Job, **the Megillot** (Scrolls), Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther), **prophecy**, Daniel, and **history**, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

II. The Understanding and Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament

A. Prophetic Fulfillment

1. Jesus' explanation of his mission as Old Testament prophetic fulfillment.

A plain reading of the gospels presents a three-fold approach to prophetic fulfillment. First, there are the teachings of Jesus in which he explained his ministry in terms of the expectations of the Old Testament concerning the servant of the Lord who would usher in the new covenant. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus insisted that he did not **come to abolish the Law or the Prophets** but **to fulfill them**. When in Luke 4:17-21 Jesus had opportunity to read from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue, he taught that Isaiah 61:1-2 was fulfilled by him, for he is the anointed of God come to proclaim the year of the Lord with all of its attendant signs. Jesus explained in Matthew 13:13-15 to his disciples that he taught in parables in order to fulfill **the prophecy of Isaiah** 6:9-10 in the lives of those who have ignored the clear commands of God and are deserving of judgment. In John 13:18, Jesus prepared his disciples for his betrayal and to know who his betrayer would be by insisting that **the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me'** (Psalm 41:9). In John 15:25 in his last opportunity to teach his disciples before his betrayal, Jesus ensured they understood that his being hated by the world was not without cause (Psalm 35:19), but that he did the works of his Father because **the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled**. In the aftermath of the supper before their journey to Gethsemane, Jesus taught his disciples in Luke 22:37 that the suffering servant passage of Isaiah was written about him, with Isaiah 53:12, **And he was numbered with the transgressors** having to be fulfilled in his death. In Matthew 26:54-56, as the events of Jesus' betrayal played out and his disciples struggled to cope, Jesus urged his disciples to consider **how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled** apart from his sacrifice and then insisted that **all this has taken place that the Scriptures of prophets might be fulfilled**. In Mark 14:49 Jesus told **the chief priests and the scribes and the elders** that though they had opportunity to arrest him openly when he was in the temple teaching and had not done it, but had chosen to do it by stealth with swords and clubs, he would not resist, saying, **Let the Scriptures be fulfilled**. In his appearance to his disciples on the night of his resurrection, Jesus said to them, **These are my word that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled** (Luke 24:44).

2. The evangelists' interpretation of Jesus' mission as Old Testament prophetic fulfillment.

The second approach to prophetic fulfillment in the gospels is the interpretation of the ministry of Jesus by the evangelists themselves. Matthew clearly understood the incarnate ministry of Jesus Christ as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, which underscores both the authoritative status of the Old Testament and the acceptance of Jesus as the long-anticipated Messiah-King. We see this first in the infancy narrative of Jesus. Jesus' conception by the Holy Spirit is a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy about a virgin giving birth (Matthew 1:22-23; Isaiah 7:14). The escape of the holy family to Egypt is a fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy about God's son being called out of Egypt (Matthew 2:13-14; Hosea 11:1). The slaughter of the innocents in Bethlehem is seen as a sign that the new covenant foretold by Jeremiah has come (Matthew 2:16-18; Jeremiah 31:15). Jesus' move from Nazareth and adoption of Capernaum as his new hometown was seen as a fulfillment of the promise of light those who dwelt in the spiritual darkness of Zebulun and Naphtali (Matthew 4:12-16; Isaiah 9:1-2). Jesus' authority over unclean spirits and ability to heal diseases was seen as a proof that he was the suffering servant (Matthew 8:14-17; Isaiah 53:4). Throughout his ministry Jesus faced the opposition of the religious leaders of Jerusalem. When the Pharisees were particularly seeking to destroy him, he refused to quarrel with them, instead withdrawing from them, which Matthew took as further proof that he was the promised servant of God (Matthew 12:15-21; Isaiah 42:1-3). The fact that Jesus planned and prepared his triumphal entry in specific way was taken to be a fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy about the coming of Zion's true king (Matthew 21:1-5; Zechariah 9:9). When on the cross Jesus cried, **I thirst**, John understood it as an intentional fulfillment of Psalm 69:21 (John 19:28). The fact that Jesus' bones did not have to be broken in order for him to die quickly was seen as a fulfillment of the instructions regarding not breaking the bones of the Passover lamb (John 19:33-36; Exodus 12:46).

3. The early church's teaching and technique as Old Testament prophetic fulfillment.

Finally, we see prophetic fulfillment play a role in the development of the church and the advancement of the gospel. Consider first the use of the Old Testament in the book of Acts. Between the ascension and Pentecost, when the apostles, the women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers were **devoting themselves to prayer**, Peter was led by the Holy Spirit to understand Psalm 109:8 in a new light and called for the replacement of Judas by **one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us** (Acts 1:14-22). Peter interpreted the ability of the disciples **to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance** (Acts 2:4) as an ushering in the last days and the salvation of all those who call upon God's name as prophesied by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:16-21; Joel 2:28-32).

In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached that Psalm 16:8-11 was fulfilled the resurrection of Jesus Christ, arguing that David foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption (Acts 2:22-31). When Philip encountered the Ethiopian eunuch on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza, he found that he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and when the eunuch confessed that he could not understand unless someone guides me, Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture (Isaiah 53:7-8) he told him the good news about Jesus (Acts 8:26-35). When Paul and Barnabas came to Antioch in Pisidia, as was their custom, on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, 'Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it. So Paul stood up and he related to the people the history of Israel as it related to the coming of the Lord Jesus, citing at various points Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 55:3, Psalm 16:10, Habakkuk 1:5, such that the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath with the next Sabbath seeing almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord (Acts 13:14-44). At Thessalonica Paul spent three Sabbath days in the synagogue of the Jews where he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead and saying, 'This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ (Acts 17:1-3). From there Paul made his way to Berea where the Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so (Acts 17:10-11). One of the great preachers of the early church was a Jew named Apollos who was competent in the Scriptures and, after receiving instruction in the way of God from Priscilla and Aquila, made his way to Achaia from Ephesus where he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures, that the Christ was Jesus.

Think also about how the Old Testament is used in the Pauline epistles. Paul began his major work on salvation, the letter to the Romans, by asserting that the gospel of God was not a new invention of the church, but was the very redeeming, new-covenant message that God promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son (Romans 1:2-3). In laying the foundation of his argument of justification by faith alone, Paul took the Roman believers back to the story of Abraham and asked, 'For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.' (Romans 4:3; Genesis 15:6). In the pattern of the Savior, Paul assures the Roman believers that the Scriptures, meaning the Old Testament, continue to bear upon the lives of God's people despite the establishment of a new covenant, writing, whatever was written in the former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (Romans 15:4). Without citing particular references, Paul insisted that the apostolic message (referenced by his what I also received) was in keeping with and completion of the Scriptures, writing, Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures...he was buried...he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3). In arguing that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham (Galatians 3:7), Paul was asserting that ethnic descent from Abraham is not required for membership among the people of God, neither is it a guarantee of membership among the people of God. Rather, the people of God are those who put their faith in God, whether Jew or Gentile. That Gentiles should know the blessing of being Abraham's children by faith is a fulfillment Paul saw grounded in God's covenant with Abraham, writing, And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed' (Galatians 3:8; Genesis 12:3). As a means of protecting the church from false teaching and developing his standing in the eyes of the congregation, Paul urged Timothy to devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching (1 Timothy 4:13), at a time when Scripture meant largely, even chiefly the Old Testament. In his final letter, Paul instructed Timothy, But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 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 3:14-17).

Outside the Pauline epistles, James argued against partiality and for a fulfillment of the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' as an example of active faith (James 2:8; Leviticus 19:18) and insists friendship with the world makes one an enemy of God, writing, Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us'? (James 4:5). While James does not cite in this latter reference a specific verse, he does summarize the teaching of the Old Testament from places like Exodus 20:5, Exodus 34:14, Deuteronomy 4:24, and Deuteronomy 6:15. Peter grounded his teaching of the people of God as living stones being built into a spiritual house in the Scriptures, distinguishing Jesus as the cornerstone laid in Zion, the one whom the builders rejected, but for God's people it is an honor to believe in, the One who is to the world a stone of stumbling, but a foundation stone to his own people (1 Peter 2:4-10; Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14).

In his final letter, Peter urged the believers to **count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures** (2 Peter 3:15-16). In this statement Peter makes clear that the other Scriptures, meaning the Old Testament, are authoritative and often attacked and raises the writings of Paul to the same level, a clear marker that the church was receiving certain writings as divinely-inspired in the era of the new covenant.

B. Authoritative Instruction

Jesus' fulfillment of the law and prophets came in deed, but it also came in word. We've already consider why Jesus taught the way he did, namely to bring judgment against those who persist in unbelief, but we must also consider what it is that Jesus taught and how that illuminates his view of the Old Testament.

Consider the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus began by insisting on the endurance of the written law of God, teaching, **For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished** (Matthew 5:18), warning that **whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven** (Matthew 5:19). Far from relaxing the commandments, Jesus renewed their significance among those who would inherit the Kingdom of God. He did through a series of transformational statements that followed the pattern **You have heard that it was said...but I say to you**. Through this pattern Jesus explained that: hatred of another in the heart is a violation of the commandment not to commit murder (Matthew 5:21-26; Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17); lust of the eyes is a violation of the commandment not to commit adultery (Matthew 5:27-30; Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18) as is the abuse of the permission of divorce (Matthew 5:31-32; Deuteronomy 24:1); the true way to not swear falsely is through plain speech and basic commitments, not oaths taken with one's proverbial fingers crossed (Matthew 5:33-37; Leviticus 19:12); the real reach of grace is not just to repay your neighbor injury for injury, but to accept injury without revenge (Matthew 5:38-42; Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21); that in addition to loving one's neighbor, you should love your enemies as well and seek their good (Matthew 5:43-48; Leviticus 19:18).

Jesus' teaching not only transformed the Old Testament, but also illuminated it. Though only the wealthiest Jews possessed means to own copies of the Scriptures, and then likely only certain scrolls, all practicing Jews would have been familiar with the Scriptures through the public readings in the synagogues, where readings of the Torah (or Pentateuch) and the Prophets were features of the gatherings. Knowing this, Jesus often demonstrated the spiritual deficiencies in the lives of those he interacted with by appealing to the Scriptures they had heard in the synagogues. When the Pharisees questioned Jesus' integrity for permitting his disciples to do **what is not lawful to do on the sabbath**, namely picking and eating heads of grain, Jesus rebuked them by saying, **Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.** (Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5; 1 Samuel 21:1-6; Numbers 28:9-10). When the Pharisees tested Jesus by asking them about the lawfulness of no-contest divorce, Jesus appealed to the story of creation, asking, **Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?** (Matthew 19:1-6; Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:24). When the Sadducees questioned Jesus about the nature of marriage in the resurrection, Jesus not only provided them instruction on the finite nature of marriage as a this-world institution, but also rebuked their lack of belief in the resurrection by asking, **have you not read what was said to you by God: 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living** (Matthew 22:31-32; Mark 12:26-27; Luke 20:37-38; Exodus 3:6). When the children in the temple courts hailed him as **the Son of David** (Matthew 21:15), the chief priests and the scribes became indignant, and they said to him, **'Do you hear what these are saying?' And he said to them, 'Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?'** quoting Psalm 8:2. In his application of the parable of the tenants, Jesus taught the chief priests, the scribes and the elders (Mark 11:27) that those tenants who reject owner's son will be destroyed by the owner and then to make sure they knew he was talking about them he asked, **Have you not read this Scripture: 'The Son that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it was marvelous in our eyes'?** (Mark 12:10-11; Matthew 21:42; Luke 20:17 [*What then is this that is written*] Psalm 118:22-23).

C. Illustration and Allusion

Without making full comment here, just consider the Revelation, which never quotes the Old Testament, but everywhere alludes to it and uses its imagery for new illustrations.

III. The Canon of the Old Testament in the First Century

A. The Development of the Old Testament Canon

We have no way of knowing the precise details of this process, but two things seem reasonably clear. **There was never a council of Jewish leaders called to establish the authority of particular books, nor was there resistance among the Jews to an expansion of the basic Torah.** The Five Books of Moses have always held a special place within Judaism, but not to the exclusion of the rest of the Old Testament, which Jews regard as a single collection (The Tanach) and sometimes even refer to collectively as Torah. (Bray, *Creeeds, Councils and Christ*, 41)

Lanier outlines five signals that the Old Testament writings were divinely inspired:

First, several writers speak explicitly about their high regard for these writings. The Jews in the Dead Sea area attest David wrote the Psalms under ‘spirit of prophecy which had been given to him from the Most High’ (11Q5). The Letter of Aristeas refers to the ‘books’ as ‘divine law’ (line 3). And per Josephus, ‘all Jews, immediately, and from their very birth, esteem these books to contain divine doctrines’ (Apion 1.8).

Second, it appears that most Jewish communities continued Israelite tradition by storing their Scriptural books, distinct from other writings, in a container called the *tevah/bimah* in the synagogue. Philo observes that the Scriptures were kept in a ‘sacred shrine’ in each worship-house of the Jewish sect of the Therapeutae (Cont. 25). More explicitly, in Luke 4:16–20 the synagogue attendant retrieves the Isaiah scroll for Jesus when he visits to preach.

Third, from the earliest days of Judaism, the Hebrew Scriptures were used in liturgy and worship: i.e. the use of the Hallel psalms (Pss 113–118), the reading of the Megilloth in the synagogue, and use of the psalms by the Jews at Qumran.

Fourth, the Jewish authors of non-scriptural writings cite the Hebrew Scriptures extensively. The list of quotations/allusions of the Tanak in intertestamental writings would be too long to provide here (see Tob 2:1 as an example). Now, we must reiterate that citing a book does not automatically indicate it was received as divinely-inspired Scripture. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, for instance, the Apocryphon of Joshua is quoted in 4Q175. But the books of the Tanak were cited substantially more often than others.

Fifth, we can point to how the Scriptures were handled and treated. The books received as Scripture were, on the whole, copied far more frequently than others (i.e. all OT books were found in multiple copies at Qumran except for Esther). (Lanier, *A Christian’s Pocket Guide to How We Got the Bible*, 30-31)

Therefore, in the period before Josephus and early canon lists, there was a core canon of the Torah, the Prophets, Psalms, Proverbs, and Job that all Jews agreed upon. Books such as Esther and Ecclesiastes, however, were probably at the edges of this canon, in uncertain territory. Around AD 200, the Babylonian Talmud (Baba Bathra 14b) provided a list of the twenty-four books of the traditional Hebrew canon. It omitted the Torah since it could be assumed, but it included the Nevi’im and the Ketuvim. (Meade and Gurry, *Scribes and Scripture: The Amazing Story of How We Got the Bible*, 120)

B. The Closing of the Old Testament Canon

Though we know little about how the Old Testament Canon developed, it seems clear that there was a consensus regarding its closing. The Old Testament records the story of God and his good creation which is then corrupted through sin, reveals the God of creation as the God of redemption, relates the God of redemption to a particular man, Abraham, and his descendants first through faith and then through covenant, redeems the people of the covenant time and again from their sinful ways, rejects the people of the covenant when they persist in unbelief, and then raises a remnant from the ashes who are returned to their land to await the new thing God will do in their midst. The Old Testament starts where the story of humanity starts and ends where God’s first covenant ends—with a people broken by sin and bound up in darkness waiting for healing and hope in the promised Messiah. It is no wonder then that with nothing left to do but wait for the promised new covenant (Jeremiah 31) to be established, there would be no more writing prophets because there was nothing left to write about the Old Testament. The records from the intertestamental period (c. 400 BC - 4 BC) demonstrate that faithful Jews recognized the absence of an authoritative prophet in their own day and with it the closing of the canon:

1. Intertestamental Jewish Witnesses

a) 1 Maccabees 4:46

They stored the stones in a suitable place on the temple mount, **until the coming of a prophet** who could determine what to do with them. **1 Maccabees 4:46** (circa 100 BC)

b) Azariah 15

We are left without a king, **without any prophets** or leaders. There is no longer a Temple where we can go to offer you burnt offerings, sacrifices, gifts, or incense, no place where we can make offerings to you and find your mercy. **Prayer of Azariah 15** (circa 165 BC; this apocryphal material is sometimes inserted into Daniel)

2. New Testament Witnesses

It was not only the writings between the testaments that testified to the closing of the Old Testament Canon. Both Jesus and the writer to the Hebrews recognized a division between the new word God was speaking and the word that was previously spoken:

a) Matthew 11:12-14

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. **For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John**, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

b) Hebrews 1:1-2

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, **God spoke to our fathers by the prophets**, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

3. 2nd Century Jewish Witnesses

a) The Apocalypse of Baruch 85.3

But now the righteous have been gathered and **the prophets have fallen asleep** and we also have gone forth from the land, and Zion has been taken away from us and we have nothing now save the One and his law. (circa 100 AD)

b) Against Apion 1.8

For **we have** not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from, and contradicting one another: [as the Greeks have:] but **only twenty two books: which contain the records of all the past times: which are justly believed to be divine.** (8) And of them **five belong to Moses: which contain his laws, and the traditions of the origin of mankind, till his death.** This interval of time was little short of three thousand years. But as to the time from the death of Moses, till the reign of Artaxerxes, King of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, **the Prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times, in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God; and precepts for the conduct of human life.** 'Tis true, **our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly; but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers; because there hath not been an exact succession of Prophets since that time.** And how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation, is evident by what we do. **For during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold, as either to add any thing to them; to take any thing from them; or to make any change in them. But it is become natural to all Jews, immediately, and from their very birth, to esteem these books to contain divine doctrines; and to persist in them: and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them.** (circa 94 AD)

All this leads Gregory Lanier to conclude, By the 400s BC, there was a clear 'inner-biblical' awareness of a collection of writings given by the Spirit of God, received as covenant Scripture for Israel, and deposited in the temple. The shape/boundaries of these Scriptures may not yet have reached full recognition, but that does not undermine how God had, by definition, 'closed the canon' through the cessation of divinely-inspired scriptural writings. (Lanier, *A Christian's Pocket Guide to How We Got the Bible*, 27)

C. The Use and Abuse of the Deutero-Canon

If you're at all familiar with the Bible of the Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox churches, you will know that while we share the same New Testament, we do not share the same Old Testament. Their versions contain 46 Old Testament books, with 39 being the same as the Protestant Bible and Hebrew Tanakh, but adding the following: Tobit (circa 200 BC), Judith (circa 100 BC), 1 Maccabees (circa 150-120 BC), 2 Maccabees (circa 150-120 BC), Wisdom (circa 50 BC),

Sirach (circa 200 BC), and Baruch (circa 100 BC). These writings from the intertestamental period were widely used among the Jews in the intertestamental period and into the first century as records of their history as a people and as stories of encouragement for the faithful, but they were not regarded as Scripture, which is to say they were not seen as divinely-inspired and authoritative for the faith and practice of God's people. A similar position was adopted by the early Christian community.

The so-called deuterocanonical, or apocryphal, books became embedded in the canon and remained there, largely undisturbed, until the fourth century. Trouble arose only when Damascus, bishop of Rome, asked Jerome to make an official translation of the Bible into Latin. Jerome took the trouble to learn Hebrew, and in the process discovered the original text was both shorter and occasionally different from the Septuagint, which had been in use for centuries. As a scholar he seized on this discovery, and maintained that the Latin text should be based on the Hebrew original. (Bray, *Creeds, Councils and Christ*, 41)

Jerome's views caused a sensation not unlike the reaction by the higher criticism in the nineteenth-century. The Bible was under attack from a scholar who appeared to be a latter-day Judaizer! The cause of tradition was taken up by Augustine, who knew no Hebrew and surprisingly little Greek, but who possessed the finest theological mind of his age. Augustine point out that the Septuagint was the Church's Scripture, used as such by the Apostles themselves. Most of the quotations in the New Testament are taken from it, including not a few which differ from the Hebrew original. Since the New Testament was the Word of God and in matters of controversy was to be preferred to the Old Testament which was a partial and incomplete revelation, it was clear to Augustine that the translators of the Septuagint were as inspired as the original authors! His views prevailed and the medieval Church continued to regard the Apocrypha as an integral part of the Old Testament. (Bray, *Creeds, Councils and Christ*, 42)

The matter raised its head again at the Reformation...The work of the Reformers is an interesting blend of Jerome's scholarship and Augustine's theology, tempered by the circumstances and learning of the sixteenth-century. Even the Roman Catholic Church is now obliged to admit that the apocryphal books are deuterocanonical, though officially it still holds to the decree of the fourth session of the Council of Trent (8 April 1546), according to which all the apocryphal books are included in the Old Testament canon. The Reformers satisfied themselves that the New Testament never quotes one of these books directly, and gives no indication that they possess any authority. (Bray, *Creeds, Councils and Christ*, 42)