

REVISITING A DEFENSE OF THE BIBLE'S CREDIBILITY

Part I - Answering Liberal Theology's "Higher Criticism"

C. Answering Critics Of The Bible's Canon

(Matthew 23:35; John 17:20)

I. Introduction

- A. Liberal Theology scholars believe the Bible is not God inspired, that it needs critics with "higher" authority than the Bible itself possesses to explain its *alleged* evolution from man-made myths to its present form.
- B. As critics deny the divine inspiration of the Bible, they also challenge the credibility of which books are to be included in the canon of Scripture (Rene Pache, *Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*, p. 165-185).
- C. We answer critics of the Biblical canon by way of archaeological evidence with Scripture and Church History:

II. Answering Critics Of The Bible's Canon, Matthew 23:35; John 17:20.

- A. Archaeological evidence with Scripture argue for our Protestant 66-book Bible to be the canon of Scripture:
 1. The Ryland's fragment that was found in Egypt's hinterlands and was dated A. D. 125 by competent paleographers reveals that John's Gospel was written no later than A. D. 90 (Unger, *Arch. and the N. T.*, p. 21; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1492; Marchant King, *Bibliotheca Sacra* [73] 130:517, p. 35-40).
 2. Aramaic expressions in this Gospel are related to those used by the 110 B. C. - A. D. 68 Qumran writers, so the Gospel's report that Jesus lived in first century A. D. is valid (Leon Morris, *John*, p. 13; *Ibid.*, Ryrie)
 3. This Gospel's claim that Jesus is Messiah and God Incarnate are true: (a) The Isaiah scroll found at Qumran and dated 150 B. C. (*Z. P. E. B.*, v. Three, p. 321) predicted the Messiah would come, heal the blind and preach the gospel to the poor (Is. 35:5; 60:1). (b) John 9:1-7 and 4:1-42 report that Jesus did this, and John 21:15-19 shows that Peter died to testify to these facts, so Jesus is God Incarnate Messiah!
 4. Jesus said He gave His word to His disciples, and others would trust in Him by their word, implying the canonicity of His disciples' words and affirming the 27-book New Testament's canonicity, John 17:14, 20:
 - a. Peter is named as Jesus' disciple in John 1:40-42, so the epistles of 1 and 2 Peter are canonical.
 - b. 2 Peter 3:15-16 called all Paul's epistles Scripture, so Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon are canonical.
 - c. In 1 Timothy 5:18, Paul cited Luke 10:7, calling it Scripture, so Luke and Acts via Acts 1:1 are canonical.
 - d. Luke 6:13-15 lists Matthew & John as disciples, so their gospels, 1, 2, 3 John & Revelation are canonical.
 - e. Jude was a brother of James (Jude 1), both being Jesus' half-brothers (Matt. 13:55; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, p. 1782), and as the apostles heeded James' verdict in Acts 15, the Early Church held Jude's epistle to be canonical.
 - f. Peter in 1 Peter 5:13 covers Mark's Gospel as canonical since Peter referred to Mark as his spiritual son.
 - g. We do not know which James wrote the epistle of James, but Jesus' Revelation 2:10 reference to the "crown of life" relies on James 1:12 to explain why one wins it, i. e., for overcoming temptation (Arndt & Gingrich, *A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T.*, 1967, p. 774-775). Christ thus affirmed the canonicity of James!
 - h. We do not know who wrote the epistle to the Hebrews, but Jesus' Revelation 1:16; 2:12, 16 references to the two-edged sword coming out of His mouth rely on Hebrews 4:12 to identify this sword as God's Word (*Ibid.*, p. 199). This reliance by Christ on Hebrews 4:12 reveals that He affirmed Hebrews to be canonical!
 5. Jesus affirmed the canonicity of our Old Testament *minus* the *Apocrypha*, *the same view the Hebrews had in His day* (*Ibid.*, Pache, p. 170-171): Luke 11:51 cites Jesus as naming all of the martyred prophets from Abel in Genesis 4:8 to Zacharias in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22, the last book in the *22-book Hebrew Old Testament* (Kittel, *Bib. Heb.*) *that contains the same 39 books of our Protestant Old Testament, only grouped differently* (*Ibid.*, Pache, p. 170: The Hebrews combined Judges and Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, Jeremiah and Lamentations, and the twelve minor prophets). Since Jesus named Zacharias and not a Maccabean as the last martyred prophet, He held to the Hebrew Old Testament books *minus* the *Apocrypha*, *the same* books in *our 39-book Protestant Old Testament, but only in a different order, and grouped differently*.
- B. In Church History, the A. D. 325 Nicean Church Council recognized our 66-book canon of Scripture as being so universally viewed as canonical by Christians that they had no debate over it, *Ibid.*, Pache, p. 175-179!

Lesson: *Archaeological evidence, fulfilled Bible prophecy, Christ's testimony in Scripture and early Church History's record of universal Christian consensus testify that our 66-book Bible is the true canon of Scripture.*

Application: *May we trust that our 66-book Bible constitutes the canon of Scripture that was established by God.*