

Why Learn Torah?

- ◆ “We are under Grace, not under the Law – so why do you study Torah?”
- ◆ “Oh, it’s that *Jewish stuff* again?” (Usually said with eyes rolling and glazed over...)
- ◆ “But isn’t that OLD Testament?” (Instead of the New and Improved – will make your dishes cleaner!! your laundry fresher!! your teeth whiter !! I can’t believe it’s not butter!! – Testament”? Don’t misunderstand, **I love the Word of God – ALL of it.** What I am ridiculing here is out-with-the-old-in-with-the-new replacement theology, American consumer approach to the HOLY WORD OF GOD.)

My less-than-spiritual response is to ask, “So what have you got in your Bible before Matthew? Tissue paper in case you need to blow your nose?” It boggles my mind having to respond to a challenge from “believers” because I am actually studying the Scriptures. They are worried about which ones? Or is it they are threatened because they have never bothered to study (much less read) two thirds of the Book they call Holy?

But here is my more spiritual, more mature response:

2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

2 Tim 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (KJV)

Now let’s think about these verses. What was Scripture in Jesus’ day? How about Peter? Paul? It was what Christians call the “Old Testament.” You see, the “New Testament” had not been written yet. There were beginning to be a whole lot of writings circulating, but they had not yet been collected so that everyone had access to them, and besides – which ones were inspired? All that wasn’t decided until much later – later than you would think... I did some research and found the following information:

Excerpted from :<http://shell5.ba.best.com/~gdavis/ntcanon/>

The Development of the Canon of the New Testament

collected and organized by Glenn Davis

This survey covers a small part of the huge body of New Testament studies --- how the Church selected certain writings as authoritative and separated them from a larger body of early Christian literature. In view of the central importance that the New Testament has within Christianity, it is amazing that there is an absence of detailed accounts of such a significant process.

The history, as covered in this survey, spans the first four centuries of Christianity, and was a long continuous process. It was not only a task of collecting, but also of sifting and rejecting. It was not the result of a deliberate decree by an individual or a council near the beginning of the Christian era. The collection of New Testament books took place gradually over many years by the pressure of various kinds of circumstances and influences, some external and others internal to the life of congregations.

Closing the Canon in the West

During the Middle Ages the Church in the West received the Latin New Testament from the Vulgate, and the subject of the canon was seldom discussed. However, we still find a certain elasticity in the boundaries of the New Testament. The most notable addition in some manuscripts is the Epistle to the Laodiceans. It was not until the Council of Florence (1439-43) that the See of Rome delivered for the first time a categorical opinion on the Scriptural canon. In consequence of the efforts of this Council to bring about reunion with the Eastern Orthodox Church, which sought support from the West against the Turks, who were nearing Constantinople, Pope Eugenius IV published a bull setting forth the doctrines of the unity of the Old and New Testament, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and a statement of their extent. In the list of 27 books of the New

Testament there are 14 Pauline Epistles, that to the Hebrews being last, with the book of Acts coming immediately before the Revelation of John. The Epistle to the Laodiceans is not even mentioned.

Among subsequent confessions of faith drawn up by Protestants, several identify by name the 27 books of the New Testament canon, including the French Confession of Faith (1559), the Belgic Confession (1561), and The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647). The Thirty-Nine Articles, issued by the Church of England in 1563, names the books of the Old Testament, but not the New Testament. None of the Confessional statements issued by any Lutheran church includes an explicit list of canonical books.

Closing the Canon in the East

The eastern churches had, in general, a weaker feeling than the western for the necessity of making a sharp delineation with regard to the canon. It was more conscious of the gradation of spiritual quality among the books that it accepted (e.g. the classification of Eusebius) and was less often disposed to assert that the books which it rejected possessed no spiritual quality at all.

Tradition says that Moses wrote down what the Lord said, but God was the author of the Torah. I think that can be backed up scripturally, however to be honest I haven't done it yet. That is another study for another time. But I did find this verse as a starting place...

Exod 34:27-28 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

The "New Testament" was written in the literary form of commentary. That's why so much of "Old Testament" theology is explained there. (Why did Moses get in trouble for hitting the rock the second time?. Why was the veil of the temple rent when Christ died? You won't find those answers in the OT.)

So if it is commentary, the obvious question is – commentary on WHAT? You guessed it, on the "Old Testament." Specifically, but not limited to, the Torah!

Why is it important that God is the author of Torah? Well, for me that answer is obvious. You can't question authority if it comes from God. (You can, but I wouldn't recommend it!)

Torah comes under such opposition because it is the foundation stone of all Scripture, and ultimately of faith. (*Rom 10:13-17 For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. NKJ*)



Without the trustworthy Word of God, there are no absolutes. Every man can do what is right in his own eyes. Torah gives us an anchor. The flipside of that is: What is the easiest way to tear down a house? To attack the foundation. The enemy knows this all too well. He has infiltrated the churches and seminaries to try to destroy the foundation of the Word of God and in so doing – the people of God.

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