

God's Plan of Salvation:

1. Hear - Romans 10:17
2. Believe - Mark 16:16
3. Repent - Acts 2:38
4. Confess - Romans 10:10
5. Be baptized - Acts 22:16
6. Live faithfully - Revelation 2:10

Announcements:

Sick: Mrs. Douglas, Mr. and Mrs. Hadley, Mr. Mathis, Lamar Mathis, Ms. Matchett, Mr. and Mrs. Pete Newsome, Mr. Sowder, Mr. Winns.
Out of Town: The Longs

If you would be interested in any of the following ways to study the Bible, feel free to let us know:

- Home Bible Study - We will come into your home or other place you feel comfortable and study the Bible with you. Bible questions are welcome in these studies and we will seek to give a Bible answer.
- Correspondence courses - We will be glad to mail you a correspondence lesson that you can fill out and mail back to us and we will send you the next lesson.
- Call us with your Bible question - #503-707-6014.
- Visit our website:
www.oakgrovechurchofchristjenningsflorida.com.
- Come and visit - We always strive to have good, practical Bible instruction at each of our assemblies.

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Did Constantine Determine the Books of the Bible?

By Derek Long

Claims are sometimes made by people in the world today concerning the Bible which need to be scrutinized so we can know the truth. Popular television channels, books, and speakers in our world today espouse things to be true about the Bible which are not so. As Christians, we need to be ready to defend our belief in the Bible as the word of God to those around us (1 Peter 3:15). If you are not a Christian, it is important you acquire accurate information regarding the Bible. It is important we do not necessarily believe everything we hear because as Peter warns "there will be false teachers among you" (2 Peter 2:1).

The Bible contains sixty-six different books. Certain books were divided into two parts after their composition and so initially there would have been fewer original books composing the Bible. Who determined which books belong in the Bible?

In order for a book to be included in the Bible, it must be inspired by God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." 2 Peter 1:20-21 says, "No prophecy of Scripture of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." Books which were not inspired by God do not belong in the Bible no matter if the material they taught was true or not.

The Bible should contain all inspired books. If God spoke His word to us and had it written down, it is something we must need. God did not reveal truths and have them written down if they were unimportant. The things God has chosen to reveal are given to

us so we can do all He wants us to do (Deuteronomy 29:29). If a book is inspired it belongs in the Bible, whether a certain person likes its teachings or not.

The determining factor for whether a book is to be included in the Bible or not is whether it was inspired or not. Men did not really determine which books to include in the Bible and which books not to include. God determined which books belong in the Bible by inspiring those books to be written. While men did not determine which books belong in the Bible, men did have to discover which books had been inspired by God and thus belong in the Bible. The determination of which books belonged in the Bible was something God alone was responsible for. The discovery of which books were inspired and therefore belong in the Bible is something men were involved in. The opening question might better be worded: Is Constantine responsible for discovering which books belong in the Bible? While the question is slightly different, it is still an important question and one worth our investigation.

The Old Testament books were compiled as they were written in a volume recognized as Scripture. Moses wrote certain books of the Bible and delivered them to the priest and were recognized as Scripture throughout the Old Testament period (Deuteronomy 31:9; Joshua 1:7-8; 8:30-35; 23:6; 2 Kings 14:6; 2 Chronicles 25:4; 34:14; 35:12; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 8:1; 13:1). It was not many years after Moses died or the days of Constantine before the writings of Moses in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy were discovered to be Scripture. The book of Joshua when it was completed was added to the Book of the Law of God (Joshua 24:26). The same process would seem to be done with the rest of the Old Testament books. As soon as they were completed they would be included in the body of writings recognized as coming from God. Daniel had writings of his contemporary Jeremiah available for him to read and he already viewed them as Scripture from God (Daniel 9:2). The New Testament writers viewed the Old Testament as containing the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 28:23; Romans 3:21); or the Law, Prophets, and Psalms (Luke 22:44). We have the Law, Prophets, and Psalms and thus have what Jesus and others considered to be the entire Old Testament. Jesus felt none of the books of the Old Testament had passed away in His day

(Matthew 5:17-18). We know the books accepted as Scripture in Jesus' day because we have the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament made before Jesus' birth, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. We are not relying on Constantine to determine or discover which books compose the Old Testament.

The New Testament books were circulated among brethren and would be recognized as Scripture over time as they circulated and gained acceptance based upon their prophetic origin. Paul instructed the Colossians to make sure their letter was read in the church at Laodecia and another letter Laodecia had should be read at Colosse (Colossians 4:16). The Thessalonians were encouraged to circulate their letter so all the holy brethren could read it (1 Thessalonians 5:27). It is obvious writings were being circulated among the early churches and some were forgeries (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2). Paul acknowledges the writings of Luke as Scripture (1 Timothy 5:17; Luke 10:7) and Peter acknowledges the writings of Paul as Scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16). Brethren were recognizing letters as being inspired and thus worthy of being included in the Bible long before Constantine came on the scene. It is important to note Constantine issued a command to have fifty copies of the sacred scriptures prepared for churches in Constantinople. However, the Roman emperor Diocletian, who ruled prior to Constantine, issued an edict commanding the Christians' sacred writings to be destroyed. It is obvious people already knew what was considered to be the sacred writings of Christians before this edict was issued. Therefore, we are not reliant on Constantine to discover which books belong in the Bible and which books do not.