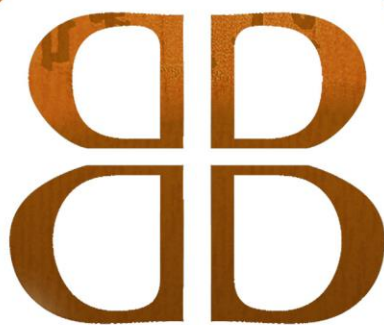


# The Canon of Scripture

VOL 1: BIBLICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

by PHILLIP KAYSER, Ph.D.



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Phillip Kayser, Ph.D.  
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Biblical Presuppositions

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Biblical Presuppositions

Phillip Kayser, Ph.D.

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*Contents:*

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|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Part 1 – Do Not Answer a Man According to His Folly (Proverbs 26:4): The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Canonicity .....</b> | <b>1</b>  |
| The Issue Stated.....  | 1         |
| The Problem Described .....  | 4         |
| God Instantly Canonized the Scriptures .....   | 8         |
| Prophets alone can canonize the Scriptures.....  | 8         |
| Prophetic canonization Illustrated in the Pentateuch.....  | 14        |
| Prophetic canonization Illustrated in the canon’s expansion.....   | 16        |
| <i>The Book of Joshua is Self-Authenticating .....</i>   | <i>16</i> |
| <i>Each of the Historical Books is Connected.....</i>  | <i>17</i> |
| <i>Canon Developed Verse by Verse, Not Book by Book.....</i>   | <i>18</i> |
| <i>New Testament Scripture as Apostolic Tradition .....</i>  | <i>22</i> |
| The Prophetic Closing of the Biblical Canon .....  | 26        |
| OT predictions of the closing of the Old Testament canon .....   | 26        |
| OT predictions of the closing of the New Testament canon .....   | 29        |
| <i>Isaiah 8-9.....</i>   | <i>30</i> |
| <i>Daniel 9:24-27.....</i>   | <i>32</i> |
| <i>Zechariah 13.....</i>   | <i>37</i> |
| <i>Joel 2:28-32 .....</i>  | <i>40</i> |
| NT predictions of the closing of the New Testament canon .....   | 41        |
| <i>Acts 2:17-21.....</i>   | <i>41</i> |
| <i>Ephesians 2-3.....</i>  | <i>44</i> |
| <i>1 Corinthians 13:8-13.....</i>  | <i>46</i> |
| <i>Revelation 10:7 and 22:18-19 with 2:20; 10:7-11; 11:1-14;</i>   |           |
| <i>16:14; 19:20; 20:10; 22:18-19 and with 1:1; 2:16; 3:11;</i>   |           |
| <i>22:7,9,12,20; 22:6.....</i>   | <i>50</i> |
| Conclusion.....  | 52        |
| <b>Part 2 – Answer a Man According to His Folly (Proverbs 26:5):</b>   |           |
| <b>Dealing With Objections .....</b>   | <b>54</b> |
| <b>Appendix A – Prophets Quoting Prophets As Scripture .....</b>   | <b>55</b> |

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## Part I – Do Not Answer a Man According to His Folly (Proverbs 26:4): The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Canonicity

### *The Issue Stated*

It is the thesis of this volume that the Bible should be the axiomatic<sup>1</sup> starting point and ending point for all Christian doctrine,<sup>2</sup> including the doctrine of canon.<sup>3</sup> This volume will seek to prove the Protestant

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<sup>1</sup>The New Testament word for "presuppositions" is στοιχεια. This word was used in classical Greek and by the Church fathers to mean the elementary or fundamental principles. In Geometry it was used for axioms, and in philosophy for elements of proof or the πρωτοι συλλογισμοι of general reasoning (Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. ). Obviously both of these definitions are synonyms with "presuppositions." The New Testament teaches that the στοιχεια are the "foundation" upon which our faith and practice rests (Heb. 5:12-6:3). We find our στοιχεια in the Word of God (Heb. 5:12) and most specifically in the person of Jesus Christ (Col. 2:8-10; Heb. 6:1) revealed in them. The στοιχεια of the world are the foundation of the non-Christian "philosophy" (Col. 2:8) and are diametrically opposed to the στοιχεια of Christ the God-Man (Col 2:8-10). Our thoughts and actions are a logical outworking of these στοιχεια in everyday life (Col. 2:20ff). We must recognize that the superstructure of our world-and-life view is antithetical to the superstructure of the heathen's world-and-life view, not because the superstructures do not have any things in common, but because of the way in which these superstructures are completely committed to their foundation or presuppositions. Paul gives us an example of this concept when he vigorously opposed the Galatians' succumbing to pressure to be circumcised and observe "days and months and times and years" (Gal. 4:10). Though the physical act of circumcision was not wrong (cf. 1 Cor. 7:19; Acts 16:3), the *idea* that lay behind it was destructive and led to syncretism, a denial of their presuppositions and an unintentional reversion to weak and pathetic presuppositions (Gal. 4:9). The study of canon is not a neutral subject. It either flows from a faithful commitment to the Bible's total authority or it of necessity substitutes another competing authority (such as Tradition, Councils, Pope, Koran, imam, personal opinion, etc) with disastrous consequences.

<sup>2</sup> As the Westminster Confession of Faith words it, "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly." The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." (WCF I.ix-x). As we will see, this is just as true of the doctrine of canonicity as it is any other doctrine.

<sup>3</sup> "Canon" is a term that refers either 1) to a rule of faith and truth or 2) to the list of books which are considered to be part of Holy Scripture. In this book I will be using the latter definition. The canon of Scripture is the authoritative list of books that are considered to be Scripture. The Westminster Confession of Faith insists that God alone can determine canon. Otherwise man is the judge of God's revelation. While there are many circumstantial evidences that God has orchestrated, "our full persuasion and

doctrine that “only God can identify His word.”<sup>4</sup> This is the historic Protestant approach to canon. The Westminster Confession of Faith declared that the Bible is “the *only* rule of faith and obedience.”<sup>5</sup> Consistent Protestants have applied this rigid criterion to the doctrine of canon as well as textual criticism.<sup>6</sup> This means that the Scriptures must be self-authenticating in some way, not canonized by the church. This is the fundamental difference between the Reformation Churches on the one hand and both the Roman Catholic Church<sup>7</sup> and the Eastern Orthodox Church<sup>8</sup> on the other hand. Rome and the Eastern Orthodox say that the church determines the canon of Scripture and that the church has authority over Scripture. But as J.I. Packer responded, “The church no more gave us the New Testament canon than Sir Isaac Newton gave us the force of gravity. God gave us gravity, by His work of creation, and similarly He gave the New Testament canon, by inspiring the individual books that make it up.”<sup>9</sup> There can be no higher authority by which Scripture is judged or the Scripture would cease to be the highest authority.

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assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts” (I.v). It is *God* who determines the canon of Scripture.

<sup>4</sup> Greg L. Bahnsen, “The Concept and Importance of Canonicity,” an unpublished paper given to the author by Greg. L. Bahnsen. This seminal paper triggered a desire in me to be totally consistent with my presuppositional starting point of Scripture. Bahnsen has also applied this presuppositional approach to the question of whether the Bible is inerrant in, Greg. L. Bahnsen, “Inductivism, Inerrancy, and Presuppositionalism,” in *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, volume 20, 1997. This is a brilliant response to opponents of inerrancy.

<sup>5</sup> Westminster Larger Catechism #3, emphasis mine.

<sup>6</sup> For a presuppositional approach to textual criticism, see my book, “*Has God Indeed Said?: The Preservation of the Text of Scripture*,” available for free download from <http://biblicalblueprints.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> Karl Keating represents Roman Catholicism when he says that “an infallible authority is needed if we are to know what belongs in the Bible and what does not. Without such an authority, we are left to our own prejudices, and we cannot tell if our prejudices lead us in the right direction... [The authority needed is] an infallible, teaching Church... The same Church that authenticates the Bible, that establishes inspiration, is the authority set up by Christ to interpret his word.” Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), pp. 132,133.

<sup>8</sup> Bishop Kallistos (Timothy Ware) states the Eastern Orthodoxy position this way: “It is from the Church that the Bible ultimately derives its authority, for it was the Church which originally decided which books form a part of Holy Scripture.” Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 199.

<sup>9</sup> James Packer, *God Speaks to Man: Revelation and the Bible*, Christian Foundations, 6 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), p.81



But while Protestants hold to this viewpoint theoretically, many are at a loss about how to defend the Protestant canon of 66 books presuppositionally.<sup>10</sup> The moment they begin to appeal to evidence that is outside the Bible to demonstrate that a book belongs in the Bible, they are inconsistently acting as if there is a higher standard by which that book can be judged. We Protestants believe that the 39 books of the Jewish Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament are the only books that belong in the Bible. We reject the apocrypha and claim that this official list of 66 Biblical books is our completed “canon.”

To those who object that this book is engaged in circular reasoning, we would make two observations: First, ultimate authority is always circular by nature or it ceases to be the ultimate authority. As Hebrews 6:13 says, “For when God made a promise to Abraham, *because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself.*” God’s swearing by Himself is a form of circularity, but it is an unavoidable characteristic of any claim to ultimate authority. Second, to make an argument for canon that implicitly makes the creature the ultimate authority is not only self-defeating, but also irrational. It is self-defeating in that it is seeking to prove that a canon of Scripture is the ultimate authority while appealing to another source of authority as more ultimate. It is irrational not only because of the inconsistency of the previous point, but also because it jettisons the consistency of a coherent “circle.” This is the difference between arguing in a coherent circle and arguing in a vicious circle.<sup>11</sup> Thus, to fully

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<sup>10</sup> For example, conservative scholar, Roland Kenneth Harrison, in his excellent book, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, wrongly states, “*While the Bible legitimately ought to be allowed to define and describe canonicity, it has in point of fact almost nothing to say about the manner in which holy writings were assembled, or the personages who exercised an influence over the corpus during the diverse stages of its growth.*” See Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 262. He says this despite the fact that he agrees with the Protestant principle that the Scriptures are “self-authenticating” and “do not derive their authority either from individual human beings or from corporate ecclesiastical pronouncements” (p. 263). He rightly rejects the Roman Catholic assumption that the church is the “mother of the Bible” and has authority to determine the canon by asserting that “[h]istorical investigation is no more fruitful in uncovering significant information about the activities of synods or other authoritative bodies with regard to the formation of the Old Testament canon than any other form of study” (p. 262). But his position is weak, leaving us with a presupposition about the self-authenticating nature of the Scriptures, but a failure to pull that presupposition from the Scripture itself. It is the intent of this book to show that the Bible is full of information speaking to the issue of canonicity.

<sup>11</sup> Greg L. Bahnsen says, “The ‘circularity’ of a transcendental argument is not at all the same as the fallacious ‘circularity’ of an argument in which the conclusion is a restatement (in one form or another) of one of its premises. Rather, it is the circularity

appreciate the significance of this volume, it is helpful to study Presuppositional Apologetics.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Problem Described*

But even those who agree with the previous paragraphs might still be puzzled about how we know which books are truly canonical. If archaeologists found the “lost” letter mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:9, should it be included in the Bible? And if so, who would make that determination? How do we know that Esther is part of Scripture? What should we think about the Apocryphal books in the Roman Catholic Bible? Is the canon closed? How do we know? How do we know that any of the books of the Old and New Testaments are really Scripture?

Some theologians have felt the pressure of these questions and have developed elaborate criteria by which to judge whether a book should be included in the canon, but almost all of these criteria have come under serious criticism.<sup>13</sup> Are the criteria the same for the Old and New

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involved in a coherent theory (where all the parts are consistent with or assume each other) and which is required when one reasons about a precondition for reasoning. Because autonomous philosophy does not provide the preconditions for rationality or reasoning, its ‘circles’ are destructive of human thought – i.e., ‘vicious’ and futile endeavors.” Greg Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetics: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1998), 518.

<sup>12</sup> There are two forms of Presuppositional Apologetics that (while competing with each other) have both offered very helpful insights about the nature of presuppositional reasoning. An excellent introduction to Van Tillian apologetics can be found in Greg L. Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith* (Texarkana, AR: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996). The second form of presuppositionalism can be found in the brilliant writings of Gordon H. Clark. An excellent and brief introduction to Clarkianism can be found in Gary W. Crampton, *The Scripturalism of Gordon H. Clark* (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1999). This book contains a comprehensive bibliography of all of Dr. Clark’s writings.

<sup>13</sup> For example, if the “antiquity” rule is correct, how could people have accepted the writings of Moses the moment they were written? No book of the Bible met the “antiquity” rule for the first people who used those books as Scripture. Furthermore, this rule assumes without proof the closing of the canon. If the “apostle” rule is used for the New Testament Scriptures, then what do we do about the books not written by apostles (Mark, Luke, Acts, Hebrews, James, and Jude)? (Though many people believe that Paul wrote Hebrews, there is abundant evidence that Luke wrote Hebrews.) It seems rather arbitrary to say that they were written under the general oversight of apostles. (Mark is said to be written under Petrine authority and Luke-Acts is said to be written under Pauline authority. Supposedly, once the non-apostles wrote the books, the apostles read them and gave their stamp of approval upon them.) But the problem is that no apostle was inspired to write these books. They were the direct revelation of God to New Testament prophets. We will look at this issue in more detail later in the book. Almost

Testaments? If not, why not? Who has the right to answer these questions? Why were so many inspired books excluded from the canon of Scripture during Old Testament times, even though these books were clearly written by inspired contemporary prophets like Samuel (1 Sam. 10:25), Solomon (1Kings 4:32), Nathan (1Kings 1Chron. 29:29), Gad (1Chron. 29:29) and others?<sup>14</sup> Obviously inspiration is not the sole criterion for canonicity, or many more books would have been included in the canon.

But our application of sola Scriptura to the issue of canonicity should not be taken as an individualistic decision. This is frequently the charge brought against Protestants by both Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox. However, the Reformers believed that to leave the judgment of canonicity to each individual person would be both unbiblical and self-destructive. For an individual to determine what he thinks is (or is not) Scripture would be to place man as a judge of Scripture and ultimately as a judge of God. Though Luther was troubled by the book of James, he seemed to recognize that his personal opinions could not be the criteria for what is or is not canonical.

On the other hand, if the decision is a corporate decision, we need to ask the question, “Which group gets to decide?” Did the religious leaders determine the canon of the Old Testament? If so, which leaders? There were differences of view among the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes and the Alexandrian Jews. The Pharisees accepted the same books that the

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every man-made criterion for evaluating canon has come under criticism. While some of the criteria have validity (for example, agreement with the Torah, unity and self-testimony, preservation, etc), it is the purpose of this book to show that the Scripture has given us everything that we need to determine the canon of the Old and New Testaments. One rule that will be used in volume 2 is the Biblical doctrine of inerrancy. But this rule will primarily be used in an ad hominem way. Volume 2 will introduce a few other Biblical rules by which other literature (such as the Koran) can be judged. But this book will restrict its discussion to the Biblical proofs for the Protestant canon.

<sup>14</sup> See for example, the Book of The Wars of Jehovah (Numb. 21:14), the Book of Jashar (Josh 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18), another Book of Samuel on the Kingdom (1 Sam. 10:25), the Book of the Chronicles of David (1Chron. 27:24), the Book of the Acts of Solomon (1Kings 11:41), Solomon’s three thousand proverbs and 1005 songs (1Kings 4:32), the book of Solomon’s Natural History (1Kings 4:32,33), the Book of Samuel the Seer (1Chron. 29:29), the Book of Nathan the Prophet (1Chron. 29:29; 2Chron. 9:29), the Book of Shemaiah the Prophet (2Chron. 12:15), the Book of Gad the Seer (1Chron. 29:29), the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite (2Chron. 9:29), the Visions of Iddo the seer (2Chron. 9:29; 12:15), “the annals of the prophet Iddo” (2Chron. 13:22), a full history of king Uzziah written by Isaiah (2Chron. 26:22), the Book of Jehu the Son of Hanani (2Chron. 20:34), and an extrabiblical (but reliable) history of the Kings (1Kings 14:19,25; Chron. 20:34; 33:18).

Protestants now accept, but what makes their view authoritative? The Sadducees and the Samaritans only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament. The Alexandrian Jews apparently added some apocryphal books. The Essenes apparently excluded some books. Even if we agreed with the Pharisees because the vast majority of Jews have, what would make them right and others wrong? Surely there must be a more authoritative standard than an appeal to the very Pharisees whom Christ opposed!

Both the Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox have pointed out that Paul calls the church “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1Tim. 3:15), and that we need an authoritative church or tradition to establish the question of canonicity.<sup>15</sup> But which claims to an authoritative tradition or church should we follow? Should we follow the authoritative tradition of Rome,<sup>16</sup> the Greek Orthodox Church,<sup>17</sup> The Slavonic Orthodox Church,<sup>18</sup> the Coptic Church,<sup>19</sup> the Ethiopian Orthodox Church,<sup>20</sup> the Armenian Church,<sup>21</sup> or some other Orthodox Church?<sup>22</sup> As

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<sup>15</sup> Under our discussion of “tradition” we will examine the Protestant approach to the church being the pillar and ground of the truth. It has no reference to an infallible tradition or an infallible church. Rather it is the mandate that the church faithfully preserve the teachings of the Scripture that have been given to it by the apostles: “These things I write to you...” (v. 4); “I write to you so that...” (v. 5). The church has failed to be the pillar and ground of the truth when it fails to derive 100% of its teachings from the Bible. As Paul elsewhere stated, “that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written” (1Cor. 4:6). But this phrase, “the pillar and ground of the truth,” does help to correct the misguided view of solo Scriptura that is advocated by some Protestants. Solo Scriptura takes seriously God’s providential work through the church to preserve His doctrines. Solo Scriptura is so radically individualistic that it wants each individual to reinvent the wheel, and fails to honour the teachers that God has given to the church.

<sup>16</sup> In 1546 (at the Council of Trent) Rome officially added the following books (or portions of books) to the canon: Tobit, Judith, the Greek additions to Esther, the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Baruch, the Letter of Jeremiah, three Greek additions to Daniel (the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon), and I and 2 Maccabees.

<sup>17</sup> The Greek Orthodox Church added 1 Esdras, the Prayer of Manasseh, Psalm 151, and 3 Maccabees to the books accepted by the Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>18</sup> The Slavonic (Russian) Orthodox Church adds to the Greek Orthodox canon the book of 2 Esdras, but designates I and 2 Esdras as 2 and 3 Esdras.

<sup>19</sup> The Coptic Church adds the two Epistles of Clement to the Protestant canon.

<sup>20</sup> The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has the largest canon of all. To the apocryphal books found in the Septuagint Old Testament, it adds the following: Jubilees, I Enoch, and Joseph ben Gorion’s (Josippon’s) medieval history of the Jews and nations. To the 27 books of the New Testament they add eight additional texts: namely four sections of church order from a compilation called Sinodos, two sections from the Ethiopic Book of the Covenant, Ethiopic Clement, and Ethiopic Didascalia. It should be noted that for the

the footnotes demonstrate, “Church tradition” has been fractured. Furthermore, how can this so-called tradition be infallible or in any way authoritative when these non-Protestant churches have changed the content of their canon? For example, in 600 AD the Pope declared the Apocrypha to not be Scripture (as did the translator of the Latin Vulgate, Jerome). However, in 1546 (at the Council of Trent), the Roman Catholic Church officially declared the apocrypha to be part of the canon. This does not seem like an infallible tradition. It seems like a changing church policy.

Nor does the Orthodox Church tradition fare any better. The wildly different canons in different branches of the Orthodox Church are sufficient testimony that the Orthodox Tradition is not a unified tradition. Furthermore, within the history of individual Orthodox communions there has been change in the canon over history. The early Syriac Bible did not contain the apocrypha, but later, the Greek Orthodox Church accepted the Apocrypha in the Councils of Constantinople (1638), Jaffa (1642) and Jerusalem (1672) and then proceeded to leave it out in the Catechism of 1839 since it was not in the Hebrew Bible. Several apocryphal books that were absent from the Armenian Bible in the 7th century were added in the 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The book of 4 Maccabees was absent from the early canons, but was subsequently added to the Orthodox canon and then was deleted again in recent days.

Other questions that may be asked about this “corporate decision” approach to the “canon problem” are as follows: 1) Can an “infallible” church change its position? 2) What makes the “later” Catholic (or Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic, etc) canons more authoritative than the early canon of the church (which Protestants follow)? 3) Does judging the canon not elevate the church as an authority over God? Another way of phrasing this would be to ask, “If any human organization decides which books are Scripture and which books are not, does this lessen the authority of the Scripture?” 5) Since both individuals and churches make mistakes, how do we know that some uninspired books weren’t included in the canon by mistake, or that truly inspired books weren’t accidentally left out? These are a few of the vexing questions that trouble some

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New Testament they have a broader and a narrower canon. The narrower canon is identical to the Protestant and Catholic canon.

<sup>21</sup> The Armenian Bible includes the History of Joseph and Asenath and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, and the New Testament included the Epistle of Corinthians to Paul and a Third Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians

<sup>22</sup> Some Orthodox churches add the book of 4 Maccabees as well.

Christians. This book is intended to help answer those questions and give the believer a confidence that we have the exact canon of Scripture that God intended us to have, without addition or subtraction.

### *God Instantly Canonized the Scriptures*

#### Prophets alone can canonize the Scriptures

It is the position of this book that prophets alone can canonize the Scriptures. The Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox recognize that apart from an infallible or authoritative determination, we cannot know what is canonical and what is not. However, we have already seen that neither church has an infallible tradition or even a non-changing viewpoint on canon. But there is another option:

It is the Protestant position<sup>23</sup> that the same inspired prophets who gave a revealed text that was infallible also gave canonical status to that text the moment it was written. The formation of every facet of the Scriptures was a *prophetic* task. Christ used the phrase “the prophets” to refer to every book of the Old Testament (Luke 24:25-27<sup>24</sup>), and Paul used the phrase “the prophetic Scriptures” to refer to all the New Testament Scriptures that were giving “the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began” (Rom. 16:25-26). Peter speaks of the New Testament Scriptures as being “the prophetic word confirmed” (2Pet. 1:19 with vv 19-21). According to Scripture all prophecy was inspired and all Scripture was prophecy.<sup>25</sup> Only the prophets could add to the canon and only the prophets could close the canon.<sup>26</sup> The whole canonization process was prophetic.

One must not think of canonization as the church giving its imprimatur to a book that was not previously recognized as canonical. Even as a book was being written it was recognized as being prophetic (Rev. 1:3; 22:7,9,10,18,19; see Ex. 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Numb. 33:2; Is. 34:16; etc).

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<sup>23</sup> As will be seen in volume 2, this was also the position of the early church and of pre-Christian Jews.

<sup>24</sup> See also Matt 26:56; Luke 18:31; John 6:45; Acts 3:18,21; 10:43; 26:27; Rom. 1:2; 16:26; Heb. 1:1.

<sup>25</sup> See Volume 2 for a critique of the charismatic assertion of the opposite.

<sup>26</sup> F. F. Bruce states, “Any inspired writer was *ipso facto* a prophet.” *Canon of Scripture*, p. 71. The Jewish Encyclopedia states, “Every word of Holy Writ was inspired by the Divine Spirit... Every Biblical book was said to have been written by a prophet... There is thus an unbroken chain of prophets from Moses to Malachi... Only words regarded as having been inspired by the Holy Spirit were included in the canon.” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, volume 3, p. 147.

Chronicles repeatedly makes mention of the Scriptural status of Samuel-Kings. But the histories also refer to the Prophets and vice versa. 2 Chronicles 36:21 quotes Jeremiah 25:11 as authoritative. Daniel 9:2 quotes the same passage as being one of “the books” of the Bible. Jeremiah 26:18 quotes Micah 3:12. The Old Testament prophets frequently recognized previous prophetic writing as part of Scripture.<sup>27</sup> For example, Zechariah 7:12 accuses the people saying, “Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets.” He is referring to a body of writing that was already composed of law and prophets, but the phrase “former prophets” implies an ongoing prophetic inscription that was happening even with the book of Zechariah.<sup>28</sup> The Bible is seen as either “the book” (Psalm 40:7), “the book of the LORD” (Is. 34:16), “the book of the Law” (Neh. 8:3; Gal. 3:10), “the Law of the Lord” (Ps. 1:2; Is. 30:9) or other titles showing the unity of Old Testament Scriptures. Each of these references implies a canonical status that the Scriptures already had.

As we will see under the closing-of-the-canon section of this book, the Old Testament anticipated the prophetic writings of the New Testament and gave a beginning and an ending point to those writings (Is 8-9; Dan 9:24-27; Zech. 13; Joel 2:28-32). The prophet Moses anticipated the coming of Christ and His revelation. (cf. e.g. Deut. 18:15,18 with John 1:21,25,45; 5:46; 6:14,7-40; Acts. 3:22-26; 7:37). Thus the Old Testament ends by anticipating the Revelation of Christ (Malachi 3-4) and the New Testament begins by referring to Malachi and the connections with the Old Testament.

New Testament prophets also recognized and upheld other prophetic Scriptures. For example, they treated the Old Testament as being a fixed canon of Scripture made up of the Law, the Writings and the Prophets (cf. e.g. Matt. 5:17; 7:12; 22:29,40; Luke 16:16; 24:44; John 10:34-35; 19:36; Acts 18:24; 28:23; Rom. 1:2; 1Cor. 14:21; 2Tim. 3:15). The whole canon of the Old Testament together is called the Scripture (John 10:35; 2Tim. 3:15; Matt. 5:17; 7:12; 22:29,40; Luke 16:16; 24:44; John 10:34-35; 19:36; Acts 18:24; 28:23; Rom. 1:2; 1Cor. 14:21; 2Tim. 3:15)

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<sup>27</sup> See Appendix A for a demonstration of prophets quoting prophets.

<sup>28</sup> Harrison and Robinson say that Zechariah 7:12 is the “*locus classicus* in the OT, teaching the inspiration of the prophets; it is the OT parallel to 2 Tim. 3:16.” R.K. Harrison, & G.L. Robinson, “Canon of the Old Testament,” G.W. Bromiley, gen.ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, revised, Vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, p.593

and the New Testament writers quoted the Old Testament over 1600 times, with many more allusions. Even the very order of the books in the Jewish Bible is implied in Matt. 23:35 and Luke 11:51. These last references are very significant because 1) they endorse the Hebrew canon, which excludes the apocrypha found in the Septuagint,<sup>29</sup> 2) and they imply the then current view that prophetic revelation ceased in the Ezra/Malachi period.<sup>30</sup> This second implication also excludes the pre-Christian apocryphal writings.

Even the New Testament canon was determined by prophets, not by some later church council. For example, Paul said, “If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual,<sup>31</sup> let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord” (1Cor. 14:37). Recognizing 1 Corinthians as a canonical text was obviously a duty of New Testament prophets, not of uninspired churchmen. These prophets were present in every city of the empire (Acts 20:23) in order to confirm the “mystery” of New Testament revelation (see Eph. 3:2-7; Rev. 10:7; Heb 2:3; Rev. 19:10).<sup>32</sup> Thus it wasn’t just Paul who was commissioned to help others to “see the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden” (Eph. 3:9; see v. 3), but this was the function of all God’s “holy apostles and prophets” (Eph. 3:5 in

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<sup>29</sup> The murder of Zechariah is recorded in 2Chron. 24:20-21, the last book in the Jewish arrangement. This is clearly a reference to the order of canon found in the Hebrew canon since Uriah was chronologically the last to be murdered (cf. Jer. 26:23), but Zechariah is the last to be mentioned in the Jewish canon. Just as we cover all 39 books of the Old Testament with the phrase “from Genesis to Malachi,” Jesus covered the same books with the phrase “from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah.”

<sup>30</sup> The books in the Hebrew canon pre-date the apocrypha, and if inspired revelation ceased in the Ezra/Malachi period (see proof of this below), then *ipso facto*, the apocrypha are excluded from the canon. Josephus represents the almost universal view among Jews that the Old Testament canon was closed in the time of Malachi (445-432BC). G.L. Robinson and R.K. Harrison, in commenting on the Josephus passage, said, It is the uniform tradition of Josephus’ time that prophetic inspiration had ceased with Malachi (ca. 445-432 B.C.)... [for Josephus] ...Prophecy had ceased, and the canon was accordingly closed.” See *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: Fully Revised* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), volume 1, p. 598.

<sup>31</sup> This could be rendered “a prophet or inspired” or possibly “a prophet or spiritually gifted” (NIV; Weymouth; God’s Word; see TNIV) or “a prophet or to have the Spirit” (BBE), or “a prophet, or to have spiritual powers” (NRSV). The amplified version renders this verse: “If anyone thinks *and* claims that he is a prophet [filled with and governed by the Holy Spirit of God and inspired to interpret the divine will and purpose in preaching or teaching] or has any other spiritual endowment, let him understand (recognize and acknowledge) that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord.”

<sup>32</sup> We will delve into this important subject in much more detail in volume 2.



context). Paul prophetically revealed Luke to be Scripture (1Tim. 5:18). Peter by inspiration lumped all of Paul's letters in with "the rest of the Scriptures" (2Pet. 3:15-16), and as a representative of the inspired prophets (see 2Pet. 1:19-20) said, "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place" (2Pet. 1:19). Commenting on this verse Ernest L. Martin said,

The Second Epistle of Peter is actually the key to the first canonization of the New Testament. It is an official statement to show how he and John (not long before Peter's death) gathered together some written records which the apostles themselves either wrote, or authorized to be written, or sanctioned already existing works into a position of canonicity. Peter's second epistle was written, among other things, for the express purpose of showing that the apostle John and himself were the ones ordained of God to leave Christians with the canon of the New Testament. It is not the later church who collected the 27 books of the New Testament... it was the apostles themselves who canonized the New Testament. Probably with Paul's writings in hand, Peter then wrote his second epistle... sending it along with the writings he and Paul had collected to John... who would be the last remaining apostle...and who would perform the final canonization.<sup>33</sup>

But though a canon was being pulled together and would be completed with the book of Revelation when "the mystery of God would be finished" (Rev. 10:7),<sup>34</sup> it is still clear that the books were canonical the moment they were written. For example, Paul quoted Luke 10:7 as *already being a portion of Scripture* (1 Timothy 5:18). Peter quoted all of Paul's writings as having already been added to "the rest of the Scriptures" (2Pet. 3:16). Jude assumed that his readers would have 1Peter in their canon already when he quoted 1Peter 3:3 in Jude 18. Paul treated his own writings as being "the word of the Lord" (1Thes. 4:15) and praised the Thessalonians that they welcomed Paul's words, "not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe" (1Thes. 2:13). Obviously the recipients of these books received these books as canonical Scripture. The very juxtaposition of the Old Covenant with the "New Covenant" Scriptures (see 2Cor. 3:6,14) implies that the new should be read like the Old – as a canon of books given by inspiration of God through prophets.

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<sup>33</sup> Ernest L. Martin, *The Original Bible Restored*, unpublished class notes, 1984, p. 16.

<sup>34</sup> See my detailed treatment of Revelation's closing of the canon later in this book.

We will later demonstrate that the canon was closed by 70 AD. If this is true, there would have been no confusion in the early church as to what was Scripture and what was not. There was no wait of years before the churches read the New Testament books as Scripture. Instead, the New Testament books were read as Scriptures as soon as they were written (1Thes. 5:27; Col. 4:16; Rev. 1:3), and were immediately copied and circulated to other churches to be so read (Gal. 1:2; Col. 4:16; 1Thes. 5:27; 2Pet. 3:15-18; Rev. 1:4,11), and the copies of the growing canon were archived in every church (see 2Pet. 3:15-18). . All of this flies in the face of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theories of canonization and support the Protestant view that the books of the bible became canonical the moment they were written. It should be pointed out that many books have been written to demonstrate the falsity of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theories on a historical basis,<sup>35</sup> but this is seeking to show that the Protestant presupposition is a Biblical one.

But two more points need to be made with respect to the prophetic function of canonization before we dig deeper into the exegetical evidence. First, the prophetic vision was anticipating a time when God would “seal up vision and prophet” (Dan 9:24) and thus close the canon. Once the law and testimony was sealed in 70 AD<sup>36</sup> (Is. 8:16), the Scriptures would be sufficient, and the only authority for the church would be the infallible Bible: “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in

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<sup>35</sup> Leon Morris summarizes the overwhelming historical evidence when he says, “The church never attempted to create or confer canonicity. The decrees of the councils dealing with the matter, never run in the form: ‘This Council decrees that henceforth such and such books are to be canonical.’ The decrees rather run in the form: ‘This Council declares that these are the books which have always been held to be canonical.’ The Synod always contents itself with saying which books are already accepted as canonical. It often speaks of the accepted books as those which have been ‘handed down.’ It never attempts to confer canonicity on a book which lacked it, nor to remove from the list a book which was agreed to have had it... Canonicity is something in the book itself, something that God has given it, not a flavored status the church confers upon it. The church made no attempt to do more than to recognize canonicity and it could do no more.” Leon Morris, “The Canon of the New Testament,” *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, volume 2, edited by G.G. Cohen, Marshallton, Delaware: The National Foundation for Christian Education, 1968, pp. 337-338, as quoted by Dr. Robert Fugate in his excellent doctoral thesis: *The Bible: God’s Words to You* (unpublished doctoral thesis at Whitefield Theological Seminary, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> I give detailed proof of this point later in the book.

them” (Is. 8:20).<sup>37</sup> If the canon was closed in 70 AD (as we will clearly prove below), then all post-70 AD apocryphal writings are also ruled out. Likewise, since God commanded us to live “by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4; Deut. 8:3), and since He promised to preserve the canonized Scriptures to all generations so that they could live by it (Deut. 29:29; Ps. 111:7-8; 119:160; Is. 8:16; 40:8; 59:21; Dan. 12:4; Matt. 4:4; 5:17-18; Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17; Heb. 2:2; 1Pet. 1:25), it rules out the possibility that we might find a lost book of the Bible in our own day.

The second point is that Old Testament prophets self-consciously realized that the Scriptures were being “written for the generation to come; and the people that shall be created shall praise the Lord” (Ps. 102:18). In other words, God was selecting books for the canon based on the needs of the New Covenant community, not just the needs of the Old Covenant community. Peter says, “To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel” (1Pet. 1:12).

This means that the canon was developed to give the Kingdom generations *all* the information they would need until eternity. Paul said, “Now *all* these things . . . were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come” (1Cor. 10:11; cf. 9:10 and Rom. 15:4). Though the Old Testament saints were commanded to live by the progressively unfolding Scriptures (as well as by other revelation from God [cf. Heb. 1:1]), God always had in mind His purpose for a completed canon when he inspired and gave Scripture. If God excluded and included details within books with deliberate purpose (as we have seen) and if that purpose is for our present kingdom generation “on whom the ends of the ages have come” (as we have also seen) then it logically follows that God must preserve every book in the canon, and do so in every age, if His purpose for canon is to succeed. This rules out the discoveries of any newly found apocryphal Gospels, and it rules out the addition of books to the canon by the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent (1545-1563 AD).

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<sup>37</sup> Later in this book I will deal with these Scriptures and the closing up of the canon in great detail.

## Prophetic canonization Illustrated in the Pentateuch

We will now dig deeper into this concept of a canonical book being canonized the moment it was written. This is clearly illustrated in the Pentateuch. The first five books of the Bible were recognized as being the word of the Lord right from the time that they were written. Moses wrote the words of the Pentateuch<sup>38</sup> at God's command (Ex. 17:14; 24:4,7; 34:27; Numb. 33:2; Deut. 28:58,61; 29:20-29; 30:10; 31:9-26) and expected the people to treat these Scriptures as the authoritative words of God (Deut. 29:29; 30:2,8,10-14; 31:9,12; etc). He said, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Deut. 29:29). And the people responded to such declarations, "All the words which the Lord has said, we will do" (Ex. 24:3; see also 19:8; 24:7). Thus the Pentateuch had full authority as the word of God from the time it was written by Moses.

A second important thing to note about this initial canon was that as Moses added "books" (and portions of books) by God's inspiration, he was said to be writing them into "the book." This "book" that was being added to was the book (or canon) of the Scriptures. For example, God commanded Moses, "write this for a memorial in the book" (Ex. 17:14). This growing "book" was initially called "the book of the covenant" (Ex. 24:7) and "the book of the Law" (Deut. 28:61; 29:21; 30:10; 31:26) and continued to be called the book of the Covenant (2Kings. 23:2,21; 2Chron. 34:30) and "the book of the Law" (Josh 1:8; 8:34; 2Kings 22:8,11; 2Chron. 34:15; Neh. 8:3; Ga. 3:10) long after Moses had died. Other names for this canon of five books was "the book of Moses" (2Chron. 25:4; 35:12; Ezra 6:18; Neh. 13:1; Mark 12:26), "the book of the Law of the LORD" (1Chron. 17:9; 2Chron. 34:14; Neh. 9:3), "the book of the Law of Moses" (Josh. 8:31; 23:6; 2Kings 14:6; Neh. 8:1), "the book of the law of God" (Josh. 24:26; Neh. 8:18) or simply "the book" (Exodus 17:14; Neh. 8:8 in context of 8:18). In each case, the entire corpus of Scripture was referred to as "the book." This is a clear demonstration that canonical status was given to the five books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy almost immediately.

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<sup>38</sup> The word "Pentateuch" comes from the two Greek words: *penta* (meaning "five") and *teuchos* (meaning "implement" or "book"), and refers to the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Third, there never has been a time when God's faithful people did not acknowledge the canonical status of the first five books of the Bible. On at least four occasions Israel swore to submit to this law: under Moses (Exodus 24), at the end of Moses' life (Deut. 27-29), during the reign of Josiah (2Kings 23; 2Chron. 34:29-33) and during the post-exilic period (Neh. 8:1-10:39). It would be a mistake to think that a later recognition of the canon (2Chron. 34:29-33) was a canonization of those five books. It is clear that when they "found" the original of the book of the Law in 2 Chronicles 34, they recognized it to already be "the book of the Law of the Lord given by Moses" (vv. 14-15). Thus, the evidence is clear that God, Moses and the people treated the initial canon of five books as being Scripture from the time that it was written.

The fourth important thing to note about this canon of five books was that provision was made for its multiplication through a careful copying process. This was different from the treatment of other books, which remained in archives. The originals of the canonical books were stored beside the Ark of the Covenant (Deut. 31:24-26),<sup>39</sup> but copies were distributed throughout Israel so that the people could obey it. We find that the king was commanded to make accurate copies of the Pentateuch (Deut. 17:18-20) and it needed to be checked against "the one before the priests and Levites" (v. 18). This process started with the copy that Joshua read (Josh 1:7-8; see 11:15) but can also be seen in later kings (1Kings 2:3; 2Kings 11:12; 2Chron. 23:11). But God wanted every believer to live out the whole word (Deut. 8:3; 29:29; 32:45-47), so He ensured that copies would be multiplied amongst the priests and Levites who were scattered throughout Israel (see 2Chron. 17:9; Ezra 7:6,10,14). We know that these Levites had copies of the sacred Scriptures because their primary duty was to teach the Scripture in every village where they were scattered (2Chron. 17:9; 35:2; see also Lev. 10:11; Deut. 31:10-13; 33:10; 2Chron. 34:30; Ezra 3:2; 6:16-18; Neh. 8:1-8; 13:1-3). Thus, it is not surprising to find that by the time of the Maccabees, many Jews had

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<sup>39</sup> Greg L. Bahnsen points out the canonical significance of this fact, saying that the book of the covenant "was placed in the ark of the covenant in the Holiest Place of the tabernacle, thus setting it apart from the words and opinions of men. Moreover, the notion of a canon is at the theological foundation of the Christian faith. Without revealed words available to God's people, there would be no exercise by God of Lordship over us as servants, and there would be no sure promise from God the Savior to save us as sinners." Greg L. Bahnsen, "The Concept and Importance of Canonicity," pp. 3-4.

their own copies of the Scriptures.<sup>40</sup> The Jews did not have to wait till 90 AD for the Council of Jamnia to make a determination of canon.

### Prophetic canonization Illustrated in the canon's expansion

#### *The Book of Joshua is Self-Authenticating*

But it is also clear that all the rest of our present canonical books were inserted into the canon the moment they were written, and were treated by believers as being canonical from the moment they were written. For example, Joshua did not write a book and wait for it to be determined as canonical by the church. As a prophet of God, He was directed by the Lord to make the book of Joshua canonical while he was writing. Joshua 24:26 says, "Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God." If "the Book of the Law of God" was a reference to the entire Pentateuch<sup>41</sup> then it means that Joshua wrote these words into the existing canon and Joshua was canonical as it was being written. And indeed, Joshua did write the last chapter of Deuteronomy (chapter 34), so it was literally true. Thus Moses wrote Gen. 1:1 through Deut. 33 and Joshua wrote Deut. 34:1 through Josh. 24:28. The canon now had six sections, which comprised one "book."

The reason this point is so critical is that it demonstrates the Protestant principle that only God can determine canonicity and it disproves the Romanist and the Eastern Orthodox views that the church determined canonicity. There is no evidence that Joshua had to wait for any church or any group of people to evaluate the book of Joshua. At the very moment the book of Joshua was being written, it was being added to the

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<sup>40</sup> See for example the extensive personal possession of Scriptures mentioned in 1Macc. 1:56-57. After examining various lines of evidence, C.F. Keil says, "we find such an exact knowledge of the law, and so many references to it, that we must assume a great diffusion of the book of the law among the people. Nor can the writings of the prophets have been less widely spread, since we find those who lived later making so many references to the predictions of those who had lived before them." Carl F. Keil, *Manual of Historico-Critical Introduction*, in Dr. Hermann Schultz, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1869), vol. 2, p. 134.

<sup>41</sup> Note that we have already demonstrated that the corpus of Genesis-Deuteronomy was called "the book of the covenant" (Ex. 24:7; 2Kings. 23:2,21; 2Chron. 34:30), "the book of the Law" (Deut. 28:61; 29:21; 30:10; 31:26; Josh 1:8; 8:34; 2Kings 22:8,11; 2Chron. 34:15; Neh. 8:3; Ga. 3:10), "the book of Moses" (2Chron. 25:4; 35:12; Ezra 6:18; Neh. 13:1; Mark 12:26), "the book of the Law of Moses" (Josh. 8:31; 23:6; 2Kings 14:6; Neh. 8:1), "the book of the Law of the LORD" (1Chron. 17:9; 2Chron. 34:14; Neh. 9:3), "the book of the law of God" (Josh. 24:26; Neh. 8:18) or simply "the book" (Exodus 17:14; Neh. 8:8 in context of 8:18). To write in the book meant directly adding to those books.

canon (Josh 24:26). If the church determines canonicity, then there is a higher authority than the Bible. But if God's very prophetic inspiration of the prophets determined which books would be canonical and which ones would not, then it was God Himself who determined canonicity by His self-authenticating word.

*Each of the Historical Books is Connected*

The fact that the rest of the historical books follow the example of Moses and Joshua reinforces what we have already said. For example, the "colophon principle" of having a successor prophet write the ending of his predecessor's book is followed.<sup>42</sup> This well-known literary technique made a tight connection within the sections of the canon. Joshua (the prophetic successor of Moses) wrote the end of Deuteronomy, giving the account of Moses' death (Deut. 34:1-12). The author of Judges wrote the last five verses of Joshua, giving the account of Joshua's death (Josh. 24:29-33 – see Judges 2:7-9). The genealogies of David were added to the end of Ruth (Ruth 4:18-22) after David became king. Compare the last four verses of Samuel-Kings (2Kings 25:27-30) with the last four verses of Jeremiah (Jer. 52:31-34). Though many scholars question the traditional view that Jeremiah wrote Kings, this is one of many lines of evidence to support the traditional view.

This tight knit integration of books would be impossible if books were just written and much later determined to be canonical or not canonical. The historical books bear the imprint of canonicity by the very way they were written. Only God can make a book canonical, and His supervision is abundantly evident throughout the process.

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<sup>42</sup> R. K. Harrison comments, "The catch-line attempted to insure the continuity of the narrative by repeating the first few words of the following tablet at the end of the previous tablet, so that, if a series of tablets became disarranged, there could be no doubt as to which word or words were to be read immediately after the conclusion of a tablet." R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 544.

## Compare the last two verses of 2 Chronicles and the first three of Ezra:

2Chronicles 36:22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying,

2Chronicles 36:23 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!

Ezra 1:1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying,

Ezra 1:2 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.

Ezra 1:3 Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem.

It is clear that whoever wrote 1-2 Chronicles also wrote Ezra. But this was a way of connecting the books in a watertight pattern of canonization. By adding to the last canonical book it was making clear that the next book was also canonical.

That this was deliberate can be seen from Joshua 24:26 (already quoted) and from 1 Samuel 10:25. The latter verse says, “then Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in the book and placed it before the LORD” This indicates that what Samuel wrote, he wrote “in the book” in much the same way that Joshua did (Josh. 24:26). Samuel added the writings of Judges through Ruth (cf. Judges 1:1) by forming a fitting conclusion to the book of Joshua (Josh 24:29-33).

The story of the kings of Israel was written by a succession of prophets, each adding a piece to the canon. David’s story was written by Samuel, Nathan, and Gad (1Chron. 29:29); the history of Solomon was written by Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo (2Chron. 9:29); the history of Rehoboam was written by Shemaiah and Iddo (2Chron. 12:15); the history of Abijah was written by Iddo (2Chron. 13:22); the history of Jehoshaphat was written by Jehu the son of Hanani (2Chron. 20:34); the history of Uzziah and Hezekiah was written by Isaiah (2Chron. 26:22; 32:32). These histories were written over 400 years, and the next book could not be added without the clear recognition that it was Scripture since it was woven with the rest.

### *Canon Developed Verse by Verse, Not Book by Book*

This process of later prophets adding to the writings of earlier prophets may at first seem strange, but the truth of the matter is that Scripture



treats canonization as occurring even at the chapter and verse level.<sup>43</sup> As each chapter of a book of Scripture is written, that chapter is considered to be part of the canon. For example, Isaiah 34:16 says, “Seek from the book of the LORD, and read...” and he proceeds to give his own prophecy (the very chapter he is writing!) as being part of the book of the Lord. This verse not only reinforces the point already made (that Scripture alone can judge Scripture – it is self-authenticating), but it shows how the chapter that Isaiah had just finished writing was already being treated by him (and by God) as part of the canon of Scripture.<sup>44</sup> The book of Isaiah was being added to the canon verse by verse. The church did not have to wait for the whole book of Isaiah to be written before it could treat Isaiah’s writings as Scripture. God inspired and canonized the Scriptures at the same time!

But this was also the way the Pentateuch developed. Moses included in his account of Genesis, the earlier writings of Adam (Gen. 5:1), of Noah (Gen. 6:9), of Shem (Gen. 11:10), etc.<sup>45</sup> God had preserved the

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<sup>43</sup> I am using the words “chapter” and “verse” loosely, as versification and chapter divisions did not occur until after the canon was closed. But the ancient Hebrews recognized distinct pericopes and units of thought long before versification was formalized. A study of the massive amount of quotations of one Scriptural book from another shows that any word or sentence was considered Scripture.

<sup>44</sup> As E. J. Young said, “Now men are commanded to read... the writing that is found upon the book. The immediate reference is to this particular prophecy. In commanding men to search the writing he desires that they look at the writing to see whether this prophecy is true. At the same time, in speaking of the writing or book of the Lord, as several commentators have pointed out, Isaiah has more in mind than this particular prophecy. He is in effect referring to this prophecy as part of a whole. It is part of an actual Scripture, of a book written down, so that men may turn to it and find therein the reference to this prophecy. Isaiah appeals to written words of God as the authority by which men are to judge the truthfulness of God as the authority by which men are to judge the truthfulness of His message.” E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 2, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969). P. 442.

<sup>45</sup> See the excellent discussion in R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), pp. 543-551. He argues that Genesis 1:1–37:2 is taken from “a series of tablets whose contents were linked together to form a roughly chronological account of primeval and patriarchal life written from the standpoint of a Mesopotamian cultural milieu... Such a view is based upon the conviction that this approach alone does the fullest justice to the literary phenomena of much of Genesis...” (p. 548) The ten sources are described by Harrison as follows:

Tablet 1: Gen. 1:1–2:4. The origins of the cosmos

Tablet 2: Gen. 2:5–5:2. The origins of mankind

Tablet 3: Gen. 5:3–6:9a. The histories of Noah

Tablet 4: Gen. 6:9b–10:1. The histories of the sons of Noah

Tablet 5: Gen. 10:2–11:10a. The histories of Shem

canonized portions of these ancient prophets' writings. Likewise, the moment Moses wrote a new verse or chapter, it was being written "in the book." Thus Moses is told to write some words "in the book" in Exodus 17:14. Later he wrote more words in Exodus 24:4, still more in Exodus 34:27, continued writing in Numbers 33:2, wrote an extended portion in Deuteronomy 31:9 and added a song in Deuteronomy 31:22. At each stage he "wrote all the words of the LORD" (Ex. 24:4). They were seen as God's Word at the moment of writing, not when the book was finished. Thus for the books of Genesis through Joshua the canon was being added to verse by verse, not simply book by book.

The fact that the canon was being developed as it was written verse by verse also helps to explain the inspired editing of books by later prophets. Solomon not only wrote many proverbs, he also edited the order of previously written proverbs.<sup>46</sup> The inspired prophet Hezekiah did further arranging of the book of Proverbs.<sup>47</sup> Hezekiah not only composed an inspired Psalm (see Isaiah 38:9-21), but was also one of three prophets who were involved in editing and arranging the Psalter in its present canonical form.<sup>48</sup> He also appears to have been responsible for the "tri-grammaton" symbol being affixed to canonical books.<sup>49</sup>

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Tablet 6: Gen. 11:10b–11:27a. The histories of Terah

Tablet 7: Gen. 11:27b–25:12. The histories of Ishmael

Tablet 8: Gen. 25:13–25:19a. The histories of Isaac

Tablet 9: Gen. 25:19b–36:1. The histories of Esau

Tablet 10: Gen. 36:2–36:9. The histories of Esau

Tablet 11: Gen. 36:10–37:2. The histories of Jacob

<sup>46</sup> Ecclesiastes 12:9 says that "he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs."

<sup>47</sup> Proverbs 25:1 says, "These also are the proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied..."

<sup>48</sup> Many scholars conclude that this editing process was the work of David (1Chron. 15:16), Hezekiah (2Chron. 29:30; Prov. 25:1), and Ezra (Nehemiah 8). This editing work may have included the addition of inspired superscriptions as well as the notes of how a book of Psalms has just ended (see Psalm 72:20). Ezra also wrote the books of Ezra, Chronicles, and Psalm 119.

<sup>49</sup> Ernest L. Martin says, "One of the most striking evidences of Hezekiah's canonization is his "sign-manual" ... a series of three Hebrew letters (HZK) that occur at the end of every Old Testament book with the exception of the five books of the "Megilloth" (Festival Scrolls) ... Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther. These five books were positioned in a special section in the Temple liturgy by Ezra.

"The "sign-manual" has not been translated in any of the English versions, but was Hezekiah's means of "confirming" or "binding" the various Old Testament books.

"When later writers (such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel) had their prophecies placed among the sacred writings of the Old Testament, the same sign-manual was affixed to the end of

An early Jewish tradition (also supported by Jerome) says that Ezra edited the Torah in ten places, bringing explanation to contemporaries who would not have understood certain historical statements.<sup>50</sup> Whether this is true or not has been vigorously debated, but even if it were true, it would be no more irreverent for an inspired prophet Ezra to make ten minor additions to the Torah than it would have been for the inspired

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these books. And Ezra, at the final canonization, carefully placed the sign-manual on all books which he and the Great Assembly recognized, omitting it only from the five Festival Scrolls which were being regularly read by the priests in the Temple.

“Of the sign-manual, E. W. Bullinger writes:

“The use of this tri-grammaton is uniform and continuous at the end of each book, until we come to the death of Hezekiah ... [after which] we find a different formula. Instead of the simple sign (HZK), we find two words, making a sentence – instead of forming the initials. At the end of Kings, we have ‘Be bound, and we will bind.’ This looks as though the subsequent editors, whether Josiah, Ezra, or others, understood the tri-grammaton as a solemn injunction transmitted to them; and they took up the work and carried it out in the same spirit in which it had come down to them, and said, ‘Be bound,’ and they responded, ‘We will bind.’ The same form [of two words] is used after Ezekiel, at the end of the Minor Prophets, the Psalms, Proverbs and Job. We do not find it after the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, or Esther. We meet with it again after Daniel, and after Ezra-Nehemiah.” (Bullinger – *The Song of Degrees, Things To Come*, XIII (1907), page 112.)

“After the Book of Chronicles ... the last book of the Hebrew Old Testament ... we find the final, and longer form of the sign-manual ... ‘Be bound. So we will bind. The Lawgiver is not straitened (or powerless).” Thus Ezra and the Great Assembly of priests, having concluded the writing of the Book of Chronicles, finalized the Old Testament canonization.” From Ernest L. Martin, *The Original Bible Restored*, unpublished class notes, 1984, p. 7.

<sup>50</sup>Nathan Wells gives examples of potential edits when he says, “Examples of possible modernization include the use of “Chaldees” in regard to Ur (Gen. 11:28, 31), and an update to the city name of Laish to Dan (Gen. 14:14). Possible explanatory glosses include the addition of “Damascus” to clarify Eliezer’s place of origin (Gen. 15:2), and the parenthetical comment that equates Israel’s dispossession of the land to the people of Esau’s dispossession of land of the Horites (Deut. 2:10-12), a fact that had yet to occur. Transitional updates include such as the death of Moses (Deut. 34), the death of Joshua (Josh. 24:29-33), as well as the arrangement and transitional verses between the books of the Psalms (Ps. 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48), including the phrase, “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended” (Ps. 72:20). Apologetic commentary is seen in the text where an editor inserted information so as to prove the validity of the narrative or the continuing impact of an event. Examples include the previously mentioned archeological explanation regarding Og (Deut. 3:11), as well as the plentiful occurrences of the phrases, “until this day,” “to this day” and other variations (Gen. 32:32; Deut. 3:14; 10:8; 29:28; Josh. 7:26; 8:28; 9:27; et al.)” From an unpublished paper, *A Defense of Textual Updating*. I personally do not see the need for such explanations, but neither do I see them as out of accord with the prophetic crafting of the canon by God’s authorization.

prophet Joshua to write the last verses of Deuteronomy.<sup>51</sup> In both cases it is God Himself adding to His book, the canon of Scripture. It is not the arbitrary decision of a church council, but the inspired and inerrant work of a prophet of God. Ezra also finalized the ordering of the Hebrew Bible, and Ezra's final canon contained the same books that the Protestant Old Testament contains. One more contribution that Ezra made was to change the style of the Hebrew letters from the old Phoenician script used by the early prophets to the "square script" of more modern Hebrew. This enabled the people of Ezra's day to quickly distinguish the heretical Samaritan manuscripts (written in the old script) from the established canonical text of the Hebrews.<sup>52</sup> Ernest L. Martin says that Jesus upheld the right of Ezra to do this when he referred to the abiding character of every "jot and tittle" of the Old Testament (Matt 5:18), a reference to the small horn-like projections that were used in the more modern square script, but which were absent from the older text. These jots and tittles made it more difficult to confuse some letters with each other. This illustrates that every facet of canonization down the minutiae of the script to be used was determined by God Himself through the revelation of His inspired prophets. Thus the whole question of cessation of prophecy (which will be more fully addressed in volume 2) is a critical question. Prophets alone could arrange or add to the text.

### *New Testament Scripture as Apostolic Tradition*

The New Testament speaks of itself as being a one-time deposit (παράδοσιν) of inspired teaching. The word for "deposit" is usually translated as "tradition" and represents something handed down with authority. These inspired "traditions" stand in sharp contrast with the traditions of man (Matt 15:2,3,6; Mark 7:3,8,9,13; Gal. 2:8). This deposit was first delivered from the Father to the Messiah:

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<sup>51</sup> When Moses forbade anyone from adding to the law in Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32, he was not saying that *Scripture* could not be added to the canon. Otherwise he would have disobeyed his own injunction when adding several chapters to the end of Deuteronomy. God was forbidding any additions to the *moral code* laid down in the Pentateuch. Thus Jews held that the Pentateuch was a complete moral code, and that the Writings and Prophets merely *applied* that law rather than *adding* to it. If Ezra did indeed add inspired notes to the Pentateuch (a point still in question), it is clear that he did not add to the moral code of the Pentateuch, since no new laws were given by Ezra.

<sup>52</sup> Ezra's last act was to form a group of 120 priests who would be responsible for reproducing authorized copies of the Bible, carefully counting each letter, and matching the copies to the authorized manuscripts stored in the temple.

All things have been delivered (παράδωσει) to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (Matt 11:27; see Luke 10:22)

Christ in turn “revealed” the “all-things” deposit to the apostles (Matt. 11:27; John 14:26; 16:12-13; 15:15; 20:21-23). By prophetic revelation the apostles gave this “tradition” of truths to the church (Luke 10:22; 1Cor. 11:2,23; 15:3; 2Thes. 2:15; 3:6; 1Pet. 2:21; Jude 3). Initially the “all-things” deposit (John 15:26-27) was given by an oral *apostolic witness* (Acts 1:21-22; 2Thes. 2:14; etc). The Spirit reminded them of “all things” in this deposit of truth as they wrote the Scriptures (John 14:25-26; 16:13-15). Anything beyond the “all things” that Christ authorized was part of the secret things of God (cf. Deut 29:29), and even if the apostles knew some of those secrets (as for example Paul’s vision in 1 Corinthians 12) they were forbidden to reveal them to the church since they are “inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (1Cor. 12:4). From the time the first book was added to the Canon till the book of Revelation was written, only those things were included which would be useful and necessary for the community that would use the finished canon. Paul was the “last” of these apostolic witnesses (1Cor. 15:7-8), and as an apostle “born out of due time” (1Cor. 15:8), had to receive His commission and the “all things” from Christ as well. Thus he went to Arabia for three years to be taught of Christ (Gal. 1:16-18) and over and over again reminded his hearers that the things he taught were received (παράδωσει) from Christ and not from man (1Cor. 11:1,23; 15:3; Gal. 1:12,16-18). This makes Christ the final revelation of God to man. This is why Hebrews 1 says, “God who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (1:1). The final deposit for the canon was completely made in Jesus Christ. Even the non-apostolic prophets Luke, James, and Jude wrote from this “all-things” deposit that the apostles had already given to the church. For example, Jude says:

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered (παραδοθείση) to the saints. (Jude 3)

If this body of truth has already been “once for all delivered” in the first century, it logically precludes the deliverance of apostolic tradition in later periods of church history. As F. F. Bruce worded it,

Therefore, all claims to convey an additional revelation... are false claims... whether these claims are embodied in books which aim at superseding or supplementing the Bible, or take the form of extra-Biblical traditions which are promulgated as dogmas by ecclesiastical authority.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, New Testament “tradition” is utterly different from the “Tradition” of Rome and Eastern Orthodoxy, both of which contain many things not found in Scripture. The oral teachings of the apostles were the infallible transmission of the “all-things” tradition with no admixture by man. Thus Paul could say, “when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1Thes. 2:13). Likewise the written Scriptures were the infallible transmission of the “all-things” tradition. Paul said, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or epistle” (2Thes. 2:14).

The early church did not see apostolic tradition as in any way going beyond the 27 books of the New Testament.<sup>54</sup> They saw the New Testament as being the written form of the “all-things” tradition and totally sufficient for faith and practice.<sup>55</sup> The church was commanded to

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<sup>53</sup> Bruce, F.F., *The Defence of the Gospel in the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), p. 80

<sup>54</sup> For example, Cyril of Jerusalem said, “In regard to the divine and holy mysteries of the faith, not the least part may be handed on without the Holy Scriptures. Do not be led astray by winning words and clever arguments. Even to me, who tell you these things, do not give ready belief, unless you receive from the Holy Scriptures the proof of the things which I announce.” (Catechetical Lectures 4,17) Anastasius of Antioch said, “It is manifest that those things are not to be inquired into, which Scripture has passed over into silence. For the Holy Spirit has dispensed and administered to us all things which conduce to our profit.” (Anagog. Contemp. in Hexem. lib 8 init.) Hundreds of others could be cited.

<sup>55</sup> For example, Saint Vincent of Lerins said, “the canon of Scripture is complete, and sufficient of itself for everything, and more than sufficient...” (On Discerning the Apostolic Faith) William Cunningham spoke of “the constant maintenance, during the first three centuries, of the supremacy *and sufficiency* of the sacred Scriptures, and the right and duty of all men to read and study them. There is no trace of evidence in the first three centuries that these scriptural principles were denied or doubted, and there is satisfactory evidence that they were steadily and purely maintained... and the same may be said of the writings, without exception, of many succeeding centuries - there is not the slightest traces of anything like that depreciation of the Scriptures, that denial of their fitness, because of their obscurity and alleged imperfection, to be a sufficient rule or standard of faith, which stamp so peculiar a guilt and infamy upon Popery and Tractarianism. There is nothing in the least resembling this; on the contrary, there is a

hold fast to the oral apostolic teachings, but the only way they could do so (since they were not inspired) was to hold fast to the written teachings of the New Testament. Thus, though Paul imposes “tradition” on the churches (1Cor. 15:3-4), he twice makes clear that the tradition is “according to the Scriptures” (see verse 4 and 5). Paul was not opposed to tradition (2Thes. 2:15; 3:6) since tradition is simply apostolic teaching. What he was opposed to was “the tradition of men” (Col. 2:8). Everything Paul taught could be proved from the Scriptures (Acts 17:11) and he insisted that the church “not think beyond what is written” (1Cor. 4:6). For both the apostles and the early church, tradition was a once-for-all deposit of truth given from the Father to Jesus, from Jesus to the apostles, from the apostles to the prophets and church, and then finally this orally transmitted deposit of inspired prophecy was inscripturated in the New Testament canon. Since God’s tradition was apostolic, we have yet another reason not to expect Scriptures to be written beyond the age of the apostles. In the next section of this book, we will give definitive evidence that the canon was closed before 70 AD, thus ruling out all so-called “New Testament apocrypha.”

But this Protestant concept of Tradition also rules out the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox insistence that it was apostolic Tradition that gave birth to Scripture and thus their claim that Tradition is broader and greater than Scripture. The reality is that apostolic doctrine flowed out of the Old Testament, and everything the apostles taught could be found in the Old Testament (Acts 26:22; 17:11). This is why every word of oral Tradition that the apostle Paul gave was rightfully tested for its truthfulness against the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 17:11), and he didn’t teach anything that was not already anticipated in the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 26:22). This is why the Old Testament Scriptures are sufficient to make the man of God “complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2Tim. 3:17). If there is even one good work that Tradition calls us to that we can’t find in the Old Testament, then Paul was wrong in that statement. So it is clear that Old Testament Scripture produced Tradition, and the New Testament records that Tradition (apostolic doctrine) in its entirety. In volume 2 we will see that this was the view of the early church.

### *The Prophetic Closing of the Biblical Canon*

It is unfortunate that this section of the book must be polemical against the charismatic view of prophecy, but it is unavoidable. It is the view of the present writer that all prophecy was inspired and inerrant, and with the closing of prophecy came the closing of the canon. The two are held together in a watertight fashion in the Scripture. Contrary to modern charismatic theories, no prophecy has ever had any admixture of man's will (2Pet. 1:19-21), and contrary to modern charismatic theories, we have seen that all prophecy was at least partially involved in consolidating the canon or making "the prophetic word confirmed" (2Pet. 1:19). As Paul worded it, "If anyone thinks himself a prophet or inspired, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord" (1Cor. 14:37). This is not to detract from the experience that some charismatics have had, but it is to show that they must adjust their theological definition of what they are experiencing. While God continues to guide His people, His only prophetic word today is the "prophetic Scriptures" (Rom. 16:25-27).

#### OT predictions of the closing of the Old Testament canon

Much can be learned about the nature of Cessationism<sup>56</sup> by looking at what Scripture says about the 400-year period of "silence" between

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<sup>56</sup> When I speak of Cessationism, I have in mind only the cessation of apostleship and prophecy. Whether any other spiritual gifts continue is irrelevant to this study. In volume 2 we will deal in great detail with the arguments of Wayne Grudem who defends the ideas that New Testament prophecy is different from Old Testament prophecy and that New Testament prophecy continues. It is risky to even use the term "Cessationism" since it represents a widely diverse and confusing variety of opinions. The following is a brief synopsis of such different kinds of Cessationists: 1) There are "Cessationists" who have said that all spiritual gifts (whether ordinary or extraordinary) have ceased. Joseph B. Flatt, Jr., David Curtis, William Bell, Sam Frost, Don Preston, Ed Stevens would be among those who deny the presence or need for any gifts of the Holy Spirit, whether ordinary or extraordinary. 2) There are others who have argued that all "extraordinary gifts" or manifestations of revelation or miracles have ceased. BB Warfield, J. Gresham Machen, and Frances Nigel Lee seem to argue this position. 3) Others who might generally agree with the foregoing conclusion would be hesitant in ruling out all modern miracles or healing, though they would question any gift of miracles or gift of healing. John MacArthur, and Richard Gaffin have argued for what is becoming known as "classical Cessationism." This does not necessarily rule out miracles, but it does rule out apostleship and signs of an apostle (which they would see as including prophecy, tongues, gift of healing, and the gift of miracles). 4) Like John Owen, some believe that the supernatural gifts and offices have ceased but they also affirm that God can do something analogous to those gifts. Vern Poythress has argued this position. 5) Others have argued for "concentric Cessationism." Daniel Wallace defines this position by



Malachi and John the Baptist. It is often asserted that any cessation of prophetic revelation would be abnormal and unprecedented in history. Several Charismatics have sought to show ongoing prophetic revelation throughout history, but in the process have had to appeal to heretics and even to non-Christians like Philo.<sup>57</sup> But the testimony of Scripture must be evaluated first. If it can be shown that God willed there to be no revelation for hundreds of years at a time, then a major pillar is removed from anti-Cessationist argumentation. This section will seek to give clear, unambiguous Scripture showing that God willed there to be no revelation for certain periods in history.

Amos 8:11-14 clearly refers to a period in time when there would be a universal cessation of revelation. He says, “Behold the days are coming,” says the LORD GOD, “that I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the

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saying, “This is what I would call concentric Cessationism, as opposed to linear Cessationism. That is, rather than taking a chronologically linear approach, this kind of Cessationism affirms that as the gospel moves, like the rippling effect of a stone dropping into a pond, in a space-time expanding circle away from first century Jerusalem, the sign gifts will still exist on the cutting edge of that circle. Thus, for example, in third world countries at the time when the gospel is first proclaimed, the sign gifts would be present. This view, then, would allow for these gifts to exist on the frontiers of Christianity, but would be more sceptical of them in the ‘worked over’ areas.” 6) Still others say that authoritative (infallible) revelation has ceased but not the five-fold gifts of Ephesians 4:11. Greg Barrow argues for something akin to this and claims that this was the Scottish view. 7) Others believe that apostleship has ceased but not prophecy. This seems to be the conclusion of Wayne Grudem. Though he labels himself a Continuationist, and indeed is, he is still a Cessationist on the kind of prophets found in the Old Testament and on the office of Apostle. He claims that Old Testament prophecy was equivalent in authority to New Testament apostles, but that New Testament prophecy was of a lower level of revelation, and not inerrant. 8) Others affirm that both apostleship and prophecy have ceased, but not necessarily other miraculous gifts. 9) There are yet others who believe that apostleship, prophecy, tongues, and anything analogous has ceased, but not necessarily miracles

<sup>57</sup> The evidence that *genuine* prophecy occurred in the 400-year period of time between Malachi and the birth events of Christ is slim. Those who disagree should give evidence that would contradict 1) the interpretation of the Old Testament passages cited below, 2) the testimony of a significant portion of Judaism that revelation ceased, 3) the lack of evidence that “prophets” during that period whose extant prophetic testimony is not filled with error. Certainly there have been ecstatic utterances and various forms of prophecy throughout history in every part of the world. However, how do we determine whether there were true prophets or not? Are we to follow the writings of the Teacher of Righteousness, Philo or some of the other prophets mentioned? Many of the so-called prophecies found in the Dead Sea scrolls and in Philo led to heresy. Hopefully the following material will shed light on why it is not at all strange to assert that there have been periods in history where God has willed to not give new revelation.

LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it.” This passage highlights several important truths.

First, unlike the days of Eli when “the word of the LORD was *rare* in those days” and when “there was no *widespread* revelation” (1Sam. 3:1), this predicts a time when there would be *no* revelation (“shall not find it”). It might be argued that this was a tragic judgment, but the fact remains that there was a total absence of “hearing the words of the LORD.” Neither the godly nor the ungodly had prophetic insight.

Second, it was God Himself who sent the famine of revelation. God says, “I will send a famine... of hearing the words of the LORD.” God has the freedom to give or to not give revelation, and we cannot bind His hand if He has so chosen. The concept of cessation of prophecy is not a limitation of God. Rather it is God’s sovereign freedom to give or not to give. The question is not “What *can* God do?” but rather, “What has he *chosen* to do?” The accusation of many Continuationists is that Cessationists are binding the hand of God. This study is simply seeking to understand what our free God has *chosen* to do, not to doubt what He *can* do. Some argue that the lack of prophecy today is not because God is not speaking, but rather because we are not listening. But this passage clearly shows that the lack of hearing is *because of God’s lack of giving* (“I will send a famine”).

Third, this absence of revelation is not because God’s people are failing to seek prophetic insight. Amos describes passionate searching for revelation: “They shall wander from sea to sea and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it.” Once again, the cessation of revelation cannot be entirely blamed upon a lack of desire for prophecy.

Fourth, Amos speaks of a cessation of revelation that was universal. The phrase, “from sea to sea” is also used to describe the universal reign of the coming Messiah (see for example Psalm 72:8; Zech. 9:10; Mic 7:12). Since the Mediterranean bordered Israel on the West, the phrase, “from north to east” would include all the other pagan lands to the north and east.<sup>58</sup> The famine of revelation was everywhere in the world.

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<sup>58</sup> Hans Wolff comments: “If the intention here were to delimit the boundaries of Palestine, one would not expect ‘from the north to the east’ in the parallel colon. One must rather think here of the vast regions into which the people of God were scattered. The peculiar combination of north and east is most easily understood in this way.” Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 331. Douglas

Fifth, it is admitted that the lack of revelation in this passage is framed in negative terms (“famine”) rather than positive terms (“no need for revelation”). Continuationists might argue that all Cessationism is a curse or a famine. This argument will be countered when we consider a command from God to no longer seek prophet or vision after 70 AD (see discussion of Isaiah 8 below). But for now it is helpful to note that prior to the time of Christ,<sup>59</sup> revelation was *not* complete. God was preparing people to *long* for the coming of the Great Prophet, Jesus Christ. Cessationists too believe that there was need for more revelation after Malachi was written. There was every reason to seek for more from God and to long for more from God. We would further point out that during this 400 year period of silence in which there was a complete famine of “hearing the words of the LORD,” and when Israel would be completely “without king...without ephod or teraphim” (Hos. 3:4), there would be many godly saints like the Maccabees who pleased God without such revelation. One might expect that these Jews who experienced the famine of prophetic revelation would be *compromised* Jews. But on the contrary, God describes at least some of them as being very close to His heart. He says of them, “...the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits” (Dan. 11:32). This means that it was possible for these Maccabees to “know” God without ongoing prophetic revelation because they clung to what Daniel elsewhere describes as the “Scripture of Truth” (Daniel 10:1). While Israel as a whole might have been compromised, it needs to be kept in mind that even those saints who were close to the heart of God had no continuing revelation of words, yet they were *not* outside the will of God.

### OT predictions of the closing of the New Testament canon

While there are legitimate differences of interpretation on New Testament Cessationist passages such as 1 Corinthians 13:8, the interpretive options of that passage would be narrowed if it would be interpreted in light of the clear Old Testament passages predicting a new covenant cessation. Paul made it clear that he was “saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come” (Acts 26:22; cf. Heb. 3:5; Acts 17:11). The only doctrine which needed

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Stewart, in the *Word Bible Commentary* on Amos says, “...the mention of the other directions—north and east—in 12a completes the compass, saying in effect that people will wander/stagger “everywhere” without success.”

<sup>59</sup> Amos 8;11-9:10 deals with pre-Christ history; Amos 9:11-12 with Jesus to the present; and Amos 9:13-15 deals with the glory period of the kingdom.

clarification by new revelation was the “mystery” of Jew and Gentile both being in “Israel” (see Ephesians 2-3). However, everything else that Paul taught, he taught from the Old Testament. After all, the only Bible that the church had for several years was the Old Testament (Acts 8:32,35; 17:2,11; 18:24,28; Rom. 16:26; 2Tim. 3:15-17). If Cessationism (or non-Cessationism) is true, it will be able to be demonstrated to be true from the Old Testament. This is why Paul could praise the Bereans when they “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things [the teachings of Paul] were so” (Acts 17:11). It is the contention of this book that the Old Testament clearly teaches a permanent Cessationism of prophecy and prophetic Scriptures after the first century AD.

### *Isaiah 8-9*

Isaiah 8 prophesies about a time when God’s people will be forbidden from going to any other revelation than to “the law and to the testimony” (v. 20), and speaks of all other revelation-seeking as disobedient (v. 19) because the “testimony” and “the law” would be bound up and sealed (v. 16) by the time the war of verses 19-22 took place. This is a very important prediction, and bears some careful study.

First, the entire context of this passage in Isaiah 8-9 is repeatedly quoted in the New Testament as having a first century fulfillment. The whole of Isaiah 8:11-9:7 is clearly Messianic (Matt 4:13-16; 21:44; Luke 2:34; 20:17; Rom. 9:33; Heb. 2:13; 1Pet 2:8), but with a terminus point of Israel’s first century expulsion from the land (see Romans 10-11; Luke 20:9-19). Note that Isaiah 8:14-15<sup>60</sup> is specifically applied to the casting away of Israel (see Rom. 9:31-33; 11:9-11; Luke 2:34; 20:17; 1Pet 2:8), verse 18<sup>61</sup> is interpreted by Hebrews as referring to Jesus in the midst of His people (Heb. 2:13), and Isaiah 8:21-22<sup>62</sup> describes the anguish of the Jewish war of 66-73 AD (see Luke 21:11-12,23,24; 23:28-31). Thus the bookends of Isaiah 8:11-22 are clearly the life of Christ on the one side and 70 AD on the other. Isaiah 9:1-7 recapitulates this same time period by contrasting the Jewish war (see verses 1-5, which describe

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<sup>60</sup> “He will be a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them will stumble; they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken.”

<sup>61</sup> “Here am I and the children whom the LORD has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion.”

<sup>62</sup> “They will pass through it hard pressed and hungry; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that they will be enraged and curse their king and their God, and look upward. Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom or anguish; and they will be driven into darkness.”

an oppression that was to occur “afterward” – v. 1) with the earlier (“at first”) revelational judgment that Jesus brought against Israel (v. 1 with Matt. 4:16). Thus the bookends of Isaiah 9 are the incarnation of the Messiah on the one side (vv. 6-7) and His destruction of Israel on the other side (9:1-5), with a reference to His three-year ministry in the middle (v. 1 with Matt 4:13).

The second thing to notice is that this short window of history (5BC-70AD) is predicted to be a time of both written and oral revelation. This revelation is described variously as “the law,” (8:16,20), “the testimony” (8:16,20), “this word,” (8:20), and “light” (8:20; 9:2). It might be objected that the revelation that ceases only has reference to the closing of the canon of Scripture (“the law” and “testimony”). But while the canon is certainly involved, it should be pointed out that the “light” of revelation that Jesus brought in 9:1 (see Matt. 4:12-17 for interpretation) was almost exclusively oral prophetic revelation, not written. Furthermore, this revelation that came from God during the first century is also contrasted with an oral prophetic revelation of demons (Is. 8:19).<sup>63</sup> That there were a multitude of false prophets in the first century can be seen not only from the numerous warnings in the New Testament itself (Matt 7:15; 24:11,24; Mk 13:22; Acts 13:6; 1Tim. 4:1; 2Pet 2:1), but also from the descriptions of the demonic that can be found in Josephus’ history of the war against Jerusalem. Thus, this is a period that is dealing with both oral revelation and written revelation from God.

It is in this 70 AD context that Isaiah 8:16 refers to the cessation of inspired revelation. God said, “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples” (v. 16). The word for “bind up” (צַוּר) means to be narrowed, to bind up, to tie up, to wrap up, to shut up, to restrict something, to be constricted, to be cramped or restricted. It expresses “the opposite idea from that conveyed by those words that denote spaciousness” (NIDOTTE). This first word vividly describes the contrast between the widespread revelation prior to 70 AD and the narrow source of revelation found after 70 AD, the narrow source being the Biblical revelation alone (v. 20).

The next word used is to “seal up.” This word (סָתַם) means to close up or to seal. The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis says, “Sealing was a means of closing something from

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<sup>63</sup> “And when they say to you, ‘Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter, should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?’”

interference... Something sealed is closed, so the term was transferred to denote shutting inside a house (Job 24:16), a blocked spring (Song of Songs 4:12), the obstruction of a bodily discharge (Lev.15:3)” etc. The dictionary also says, “What is sealed may be taken as ended, so sins are sealed (Dan. 9:24), and sealed in a bag, not to be reopened (Job 14:17).” Applied to revelation, this word means that the stream of revelation is sealed up, the receptacle of revelation is closed off, and the giving of revelation is blocked.

These two Hebrew words could hardly be stronger in describing a complete cessation of God’s revelation. Yet God further strengthened the doctrine of Cessationism by pitting the unfaithful Jews of that war who would seek revelation from spirits (v. 19) against the faithful Jews who appealed to the closed canon of Scripture alone (v. 20). It is a very stark contrast between the continuing revelation of demons and the completed revelation of God. From 70 AD and on, God’s people were to subscribe to the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*: “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (v. 20) This is a categorical affirmation of one authority, one judge of truth, and one source for speaking truth. From 70 AD and on, there should never be an appeal to other authoritative sources. Yet the apostate Jews going through this war would ignore this command and seek alternative revelation (v. 19), and thus end up actually cursing God (v. 21) and walking in darkness (v. 22). We would expect that if the New Testament speaks of a time when prophecy will cease, it should be interpreted in light of this clear passage.

### *Daniel 9:24-27*

Though the seventy weeks of Daniel 9 are notoriously controversial and difficult to understand, the first century Cessationism of this passage is still quite clear. The first verse of this passage says, “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.” The phrase, “to seal up vision and prophecy” clearly speaks of a cessation of prophetic revelation at some point in history. The word for “to seal up” is the same Hebrew word that was already discussed in Isaiah 8, and should be interpreted in parallel with that passage. Interestingly, the Hebrew word is used twice in this verse, earlier being translated as “to make an end of” in the phrase “to make an end of sins.” So this passage predicts an end to prophetic revelation some

time after the New Covenant starts. The following points amplify upon this concept.

The New King James Version translates the Hebrew phrase, וְלִקְרֹתָם הָזוֹן וְנָבִיא, as “to seal up vision and prophecy.” The Hebrew word for “vision” is used of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 8:1,2,13), the oral prophecies of prophets (1Sam. 3:1; 1Chron. 17:15) as well as the recorded messages of the Scriptures (2Chron. 32:32; Is. 1:1; Obadiah 1; etc.). It is a word that seems to cover all infallible revelation. The Hebrew word for “prophecy” is נָבִיא (“prophet”), not נְבוּאָה (“prophecy”). And thus it is more literally translated as “to seal up vision and prophet” in many versions (DRBY, Yng, NRSV, ESV). Elsewhere in Scripture נָבִיא always has reference to the *person* who prophesies, not to the prophecy itself. Of the over 300 times this word occurs, it is never translated “prophecy” except here. Always its consistent meaning is prophet. Likewise the word נְבוּאָה is never translated “prophet.” Rather it refers to the revelation of the prophet. So there are two distinct things that were promised to cease. God was going to make an end of both the vehicle of inspired revelation (“prophet”) and the inspired revelation itself (“vision”). This is not dealing with a fulfillment of prophecy, but an ending of prophetic revelation and office.

But what is the terminal point of this cessation? There are two considerations that help us to understand this. The first is the meaning and duration of the 70 weeks. The second is the timing of the last event recorded in the chapter, a war which “shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” and make an “end of it” (vv. 26-27).

There is little consensus on the answer to the first question. However, in light of the fact that the New Testament clearly refers to the desolation of abomination referred to in verse 27 as occurring during the time period of the Roman war against Jerusalem and the Jews throughout the empire<sup>64</sup> (66-73AD), the cessation of vision and prophet should also occur before Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 AD. Thus, whether there will ever be agreement on the nature of the seventy weeks being discussed

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<sup>64</sup>Compare Mark 13:14 with Luke 21:20-24 for a clear case that this is referring to the past casting away of Israel (just as in Isaiah 8) rather than some speculated future war against Jerusalem. On the phrase, “shall destroy the city and the sanctuary see Matt. 22:2,7; 23:38; 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 19:43,44; 21:6, 24; Acts 6:13,14. On verse 26b-27 see Matt. 23:38 (“behold your house is left to you desolate”); Luke 21:20 (“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.”). See Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14 which quotes Daniel and applies to 70 A.D. See Luke 19:43-44 for the embankments brought against Jerusalem. See also Luke 21:24.

below, verses 26-27 should be seen as the terminus point for vision and prophet.

However, it is worthwhile briefly mentioning some interpretive options with regard to the seventy weeks themselves. Even if the “week” mentioned in verse 27 is not tied to the length of the war mentioned in verses 26-27, it is clear that the war should be the latest terminus allowed for the sealing up of vision and prophet. Nevertheless, it may be helpful to articulate two interpretations of the 70 weeks that could credibly fit a first century cessation of vision and prophet.

Almost all commentaries agree that there are both weeks of days (with a Sabbath day) and weeks of years (with a Sabbath year). If Daniel were talking about 70 weeks of days, it would amount to 490 days (70 weeks =  $70 \times 7$  days = 490 days). I know of no author who believes this is talking about what would happen within 490 days. Most commentators take a second option and see this as a reference to 70 weeks of years (or  $70 \times 7$  years = 490 years).

Beyond that, there is little agreement with many different interpretations being offered by scholars. The two most likely interpretations are:

1) the last week of years ends  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years after Jesus was crucified, with the ending of sacrifice and offering in verse 27 referring not to a literal ending of sacrifices at the temple, but Christ making all sacrifices null by his death. Though verse 27 awkwardly seems to indicate that the last week occurs during the war against Jerusalem, there are a number of scholars who hold that it represents the three and a half years of Christ’s ministry plus the first three and a half years of post-Pentecost history. It just so happens that Paul, the “last” of the apostles and one “born out of due time” (1Cor. 15:8), was commissioned three and a half years after Christ was crucified. This could literally refer to a closing off of prophets commissioned by Christ.

2) The last week of years ends in 73 AD after a literal seven year war that lasted from 66-73 AD. This view has several strengths. First, it reconciles with the timing that Isaiah 8 gave for prophetic revelation being sealed up during the war. Second, the week mentioned in verse 27 happens to be the length of the hostilities against the Jews throughout the Roman Empire (lasting from 66-73 AD). Third, sacrifice and offering ended exactly in the middle of the seven-year war, just as verse 27 says. Fourth, this interpretation not only accounts for the second half of the



week (the second 1290 days),<sup>65</sup> but also accounts for the 1335 days mentioned in Daniel 12:12 (the exact number of days from the day that the temple was burned until Masada fell).<sup>66</sup> Fifth, this interpretation makes better sense of the word “after” in verse 26, which describes Messiah being cut off “*after* the sixty-two weeks” but not *during* the seventieth week. Sixth, on this interpretation, verse 24a can be taken literally when it gives the number of years left “for your people and for your holy city,” whereas both people and city continued to exist for almost forty years after the seventieth week on the previous interpretation.

The choice between these two views hinges on at least three issues. First, can there be gaps in the 490 years or must they run consecutively? In favor of gaps are the following considerations: **1)** The text does not say 490 years, but 70 weeks. **2)** If the “command” of verse 23 is the same as the “command” in verse 25, then the countdown for 490 would start in 537 BC (Cyrus, year 1). This would make the first option impossible to justify, but fits the chronology being proposed in the second option perfect to the year.<sup>67</sup> **3)** The weeks are grouped into three parts: seven weeks” (v. 25), “sixty-two weeks” (vv. 25,26), and “one week” – v. 27.

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<sup>65</sup> From the day the temple was burned, hostilities would continue against the Jews throughout the entire empire for 1290 days. After that, the only hostilities against Jews anywhere would be Rome’s continuing war against the tiny group of Jews in Massada. (See next footnote.) The Hebrew date for the burning of the temple was Ab 9, 4070 AM. The Seleucid date is Loos 9, 381 SE. The Gregorian date was August 3, 70. Josephus records continuing hostilities after that date as Jews were sold into slavery, the fortresses of Machaerus and Herodian were conquered, the massacres of Jews in Alexandria, Cyrene and other cities were carried out, the Jewish temple in Egypt was looted and demolished, 3000 wealthy Jews were slain in Libya, the massacre of the last of the Sicarii took place, and other hostilities were carried out that “completely shattered” the Jews. Note that Gaalya Cornfield, *Josephus: The Jewish War*, p. 505, note 409[a] shows that the massacre of the Sicarii occurred in late 73 AD rather than after the fall of Masada.

<sup>66</sup> The date given by Josephus for the fall of Masada was Xanticus 15. The most recent scholarship dates the fall of Masada to 74 AD rather than to the traditional 73 AD. See Gaalya Cornfield, *Josephus: The Jewish War*, p. 505, note 409[a]. He says, “According to most modern Israeli scholars, among them the late M. Avi-Yonah (*Atlas Cartall*) and B. Mazar, the siege and fall of Masada took place in AD 74 and not in 73, as believed heretofore...” See also p. 502, note 401 [d]. See also the notes in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* under “The Jewish War.” Xanticus 15 in the year 74 fell on March 30-31 (Hebrews noted time from sunset to sunset thus making a difference of a day depending on which portion of the day is being considered. But from Loos 9 of 70 to Xanticus 15 of 74 is exactly 1335 days.)

<sup>67</sup> Of course, many scholars have ways in which they separate the “command” of verse 23 from the “command” of verse 25, and start the countdown under a later emperor.

Why list them in three sections if there are no gaps? **4) Making gaps in the predicted 70 weeks makes the prophecy parallel to the gaps that everyone acknowledges were in place for the 70 weeks that led up to Israel's exile.** Keep in mind that this promise of 70 weeks flows out of Daniel's calculation of Jeremiah's prophecy about the 70 years of exile (see Daniel 9:2). This means that there were seventy Sabbath-year violations by Israel that led to the 70-year exile.<sup>68</sup> No matter how those Sabbath violations are calculated, there are large gaps of time when Israel did indeed keep the Sabbath year mandate. It just so happens that when the recorded years in which the "land had rest" are subtracted from the time between Cyrus and 73AD, you have an exact calculation of years that amounts to 70 weeks of Sabbath violations.<sup>69</sup> The last unfaithful, Sabbathless week of years were the years from 66-73 AD. The final gap occurred as John the Baptist turned the hearts of the fathers to the children and of the children to the fathers and averted (for forty years) God's curse on the land (Mal. 4:6). Any Jew living in the time of Christ who counted the previous three forty year periods would have been able to know the time of this war against Jerusalem to the year.

The second issue that divides between these two options is the word "after" in verse 26. When the Messiah is said to be cut off "after the sixty-two weeks" (v. 26), how far "after" the sixty-two weeks is He cut off? One view holds that it is 3½ years after the sixty-two weeks, and the second view holds that it is 40 years after the sixty-two weeks. Both views take the "after" seriously. The first view can account for "after" by saying that half way through the last week is indeed "after the sixty-two weeks." It is an odd way of phrasing the question, but it can work. But if we take the second interpretation, Christ's crucifixion does not happen either within the sixty-two weeks or within the seventieth week. The only way to speak of Christ's crucifixion would have been by placing it after the sixty-two weeks but before the seventieth week, which is exactly the way the text lays the plan out.

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<sup>68</sup> Jeremiah consigned Israel to 70 years of exile because there were seventy Sabbath years that Israel had failed to let the land lie fallow (see 2Chron. 36:21; Jer. 25:9-12; 27:6-8; 29:10). It is clear to all scholars that there were gaps in Israel's earlier seventy Sabbathless weeks of years. This means seventy Sabbath years had been violated (with gaps of faithfulness here and there), and now God is predicting another seventy Sabbaths that would be violated before they are cast out of the land. If the seventy weeks deals with seventy violated Sabbaths, then there is no reason why they need to be without gaps.

<sup>69</sup> For a detailed analysis of this, see the sermon series by Phillip Kayser on Daniel.

The last interpretive issue is what is being referred to as happening during the “middle of the week” in verse 27? Does the “middle of the week” refer to the time Jesus is cut off or the time that the literal sacrifices and offerings are cut off? Though it could fit the first interpretation, the most natural reading of the week in verse 27 is to take it as the length of the war. This is strengthened when it is realized that verse 24 gives seventy weeks of countdown “for your people *and for your holy city*.” It appears that the last week will end when the “holy city” ends and when God’s people enter into the final exile. This doesn’t make sense on the first interpretation, but it makes a great deal of sense on the second interpretation. This gives a smooth parallelism between the reason for the first exile that Jeremiah mentions and the reason for the second exile found in Daniel’s 70 weeks.

Though there may be other options for interpreting the weeks, it is helpful to note that this interpretation makes the sealing up of vision and prophet consistent with the interpretation already given in Isaiah 8. But again, the seventy weeks controversy can be swept aside if the terminus can be seen to be somehow prior to the exile of the Jews in 70 AD. Vision and prophet clearly end before 70 AD.

### *Zechariah 13*

Zechariah 13 also has a first century context. First, chapter 12:10 refers to both the piercing of Christ’s side and the subsequent pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost (see John 19:34-37; Rev. 1:7; Matt 24:30). Second, Zechariah 12:11-14 must be fulfilled in a period of history when Israel is still distinguishable by tribes and families (impossible after the scattering of Israel in the first century). This gives a clear first century context. Third, chapter 13:1 refers to Christ’s redemption (see John 19:34; Rev. 21:6,7; 1John 1:7; Ezek. 47:1-5). Fourth, Zechariah 13:7 is quoted in Matthew 26:31,56 and Mark 14:27 as being fulfilled in 30 AD. Fifth, Zechariah 13:8-9 is a reference to 70 AD when two-thirds of Israel is destroyed. This parallels each of the other Old Testament Cessationist passages. Finally, all of the above sections are linked by the time indicator “in that day” (12:4,8,9,11; 13:1,2,4). Therefore (whatever the ambiguities some might see in one or two of the points above), the context should not be stretched beyond the first century.

It is in this context that God not only begins a glorious advancement of the Gospel (“cut off the names of idols...unclean spirits”) but also ends the age of prophets (“I will also cause the prophets... to depart from the land”). Zechariah 13 as a whole says,

“In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.

“It shall be in that day,” says the LORD of hosts, “that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land.

“It shall come to pass *that* if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who begot him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the LORD.’ And his father and mother who begot him shall thrust him through when he prophesies.

“And it shall be in that day *that* every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive.

“But he will say, ‘I *am* no prophet, I *am* a farmer; for a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.’

And *one* will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will answer, ‘*Those* with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’

“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd,  
Against the Man who is My Companion,”  
Says the LORD of hosts.

“Strike the Shepherd,  
And the sheep will be scattered;  
Then I will turn My hand against the little ones.  
And it shall come to pass in all the land,”

Says the LORD,  
“*That* two-thirds in it shall be cut off *and* die,

But *one*-third shall be left in it:  
I will bring the *one*-third through the fire,  
Will refine them as silver is refined,  
And test them as gold is tested.

They will call on My name,  
And I will answer them.

I will say, ‘This *is* My people’;  
And each one will say, ‘The LORD *is* my God.’ ”

That this cessation of the prophetic office is a cessation of true New Testament prophets can be seen by the following considerations: First, the context is the first century. Second, God is the cause of Cessationism (“I will also cause... to depart” – v. 2). Third, true prophetic revelation is

contrasted with the demonic (“the prophets and the unclean spirit”). Fourth, false prophets do continue to exist for a time after God causes the “prophets” to depart from the land. This can be seen by the words “It shall come to pass that if anyone still prophecies” (v. 3). The word “still” indicates that there are some prophetic claims even after God causes “the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land.”<sup>70</sup> Fifth, this Cessationism (“I will cause... to depart”) makes false prophets reticent and even ashamed to claim to be prophets (“every prophet will be ashamed of his vision” see also the context of verses 4-6) and makes God’s people unwilling to receive new prophecies from others (“if anyone still prophecies...[they] will say to him...you have spoken lies”). Sixth, this reluctance to receive new prophecies after the time of cessation is with regard to any prophecy, whether in the name of the Lord or not (“if anyone still prophecies... in the name of the LORD... every prophet”). Seventh, New Testament prophecy is treated just like Old Testament prophecy, and the prophets are judged according to the standard of Deuteronomy by being put to death (v. 3). This last point is a critical one in critiquing Continuationism because Continuationists do not believe New Testament prophets should be judged by the same standard as Old Testament prophets. Finally, this parallels Daniel 9 in making both the vehicle of revelation (“prophet”) and the message of revelation (“prophecies”) to cease. This answers those who claim that there is no office of prophet today, but that there is a manifestation of prophecy. The passage appears to discredit both.

However, even if the timing of the above interpretation is not accepted, one still has to deal with the clear statement that at some point in history God Himself will remove prophets from the land. This is not at the end of history (see “still” in v. 3, and the progress of history in verses 1-6). So regardless of one’s interpretation of the Zechariah 13 time period, the standard Continuationist interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13 and Ephesians 4 (which says that prophecy will continue until the Second Coming) is contradicted. This also contradicts the interpretation that the office of prophet will cease in the first century, but the occasional act of prophesying will continue, because this rules out both office and prophetic revelation at some point in history.

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<sup>70</sup> Whether this is a reference to the massive numbers of demons that Christ cast out, we are not sure. But it is significant that during the war against Jerusalem (66-73 AD) that is described in the first chapters of Revelation, millions of demons are once again released from the pit (Rev. 9:1-21). It may be that many of those demons had been consigned to the pit during the ministry of Jesus.

*Joel 2:28-32*

Joel 2 details a time of God's marvelous presence and blessing with His people (vs. 18-27) followed by a later time in which people would prophesy and dream dreams and see visions. "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls."

The first point relevant to Cessationism is that the church can have God's full favor, blessing, and presence (vs. 18-27)<sup>71</sup> without having this pouring out of charismatic gifts. Note that the pouring out of revelation comes after God's Inter-Testamental blessing. To speak of a lack of ongoing prophecy as a sign of God's curse is not consistent with Scripture.

Second, these revelatory gifts come after the Inter-Testamental period mentioned in verses 18-27 but "before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD" when God's wrath is poured out upon Jerusalem in the war of 66-73 AD (vv. 30-32). This makes this passage on New Testament gifts occur during the same time period that the previous Old Testament Scriptures do - between the Inter-Testamental period and 70 AD. To stretch the application of Joel beyond that is not only unnecessary, it violates the immediate and broader context.

Third, when Acts interprets this passage as being fulfilled in the "last days" of the Old Covenant, it is interpreting this consistently with each of the Old Testament passages on Cessationism. Every reference to "last days" in the Bible refers to the time period of foreign domination of Israel that culminates in Israel's destruction as a nation in 70 A.D. Thus Jesus was born in the last days (1 Pet 1:20), spoke in the last days (Heb.

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<sup>71</sup> "the LORD will be zealous for His land...satisfied...be glad and rejoice...the LORD has done marvellous things... rejoice in the LORD your God... He has given you...vats shall overflow with new wine and oil...So I will restore to you...the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you, and My people shall never be put to shame. Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel..." etc

1:1), and the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost on the last days (Acts 2:16-17). These are the last days of Israel, temple, sacrifices, priesthood, Old Covenant, etc. Thus, Hebrews uses the present tense when it says “Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” Heb. 8:13. The final “shaking” and evidence of the new kingdom was to be the destruction of Jerusalem (Heb. 12:25-29 with Haggai 2:6).

Fourth, connected to these spiritual gifts are miraculous signs in verses 30-31. These signs in some way confirm the revelatory gifts of God. (The New Testament indicates that this is not the exclusive function of miracles, but it was certainly a significant function of miracles.)

NT predictions of the closing of the New Testament canon

### *Acts 2:17-21*

Acts 2 gives an inspired interpretation of the Joel prophecy, but it does so in a much broader prophetic context. Just as God promised to establish a new Israel and a new temple in Babylon from the remnant of exiles (see Ezekiel 10),<sup>72</sup> God promised a much later time when He

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<sup>72</sup> In Ezekiel 10 the Spirit leaves the temple proper, goes over the threshold (10:18) and moves to the south side of the temple’s outer court (10:3-5, 18), and then goes out of the East Gate (10:19; 11:1ff) and moves away from Israel (which would be east) into the remnant of Israel in Babylon making a new sanctuary not of brick and mortar but of Spirit and people (11:16 calls that His “little sanctuary,” or as the margin says, “little holy place”). So even though the temple was about to be destroyed in Ezekiel’s day, God comforts them by saying that the remnant of Israel would become the new Israel and as they walked in the Spirit He would make a spiritual temple among them. And interestingly, just as the Spirit later fell upon believers at Pentecost, the Spirit fell upon Ezekiel at that time, and in the vision, made him prophesy to the crowds in the temple. So this first time that the Spirit leaves the temple is in chapters 10 and 11. And it parallels the second time in many details:

The second time Ezekiel describes a future reconstructed temple, and the Spirit being poured out it does so in much the same way, but it is clearly a reference to Pentecost. It mentions the upper rooms and then in chapter 44 says that *after* the God of Israel walks through this gate, it will be sealed up. In the next chapters Ezekiel continues to describe this temple and in chapter 47 says that the Spirit, symbolized by a river of water poured out, would leave the temple once again. The water starts as a trickle on the south side of the altar, but then flows out of the East gate and grows over time into a huge river that eventually brings healing to the world. This is exactly what happened at Pentecost. God took the Spirit from the temple and made the remnant of Israel into His tabernacle (as He promised in Ezekiel 37). And whether you hold that the house that Acts 2 refers to is the entire temple (as in Ezekiel 44:7), or a meeting place on the inner walls, or the Southern Porticos, it was on the south side of the temple. And as the Spirit-filled Christians left the temple, the trickle gradually grew deeper and deeper as the church grew, and it is destined to become a river so great that no one can cross it, and eventually so great that it

would pour forth the Spirit and establish a new Israel and a new temple during New Covenant times. Luke crafts the books of Luke and Acts in such a way that it shows that the Spirit was indeed poured forth to establish a new Israel from the remnant of the Old Israel. God formed a new “nation” (see Matt 21:43) and bestowed on it the kingdom (Luke 22:29). He established twelve apostles “to sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:30). As to apostles, it was symbolically essential that Matthias replace Judas as one of those princes (Acts 1:15-26).<sup>73</sup> As to twelve tribes it is important to remember that the early church was exclusively Jewish in makeup and was composed of Jews from all twelve tribes.<sup>74</sup> It very literally was the remnant of Israel into which the Gentiles would be grafted (Rom. 12:17-24). In addition to the twelve princes and twelve tribes, there was also a new eldership of seventy on whom the Spirit would rest in prophetic revelation (see Luke 10:1-24) that corresponds to the seventy Spirit-anointed elders who

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brings healing to the whole world. I think all of that was in Luke’s mind as he composed these two chapters

<sup>73</sup> That the selection of Matthias was proper can be seen from the following considerations:

- Peter was following the Scripture’s authority - “this Scripture had to be fulfilled” (v. 16). Based on Psalm 109:8 Peter says, “therefore... one of these *must* become a witness with us of His resurrection.” This would be a witness against Israel by the new Israel, and the symbolism needed to be present when Pentecost came.
- There is not the slightest hint from Luke that what they did was wrong.
- Luke refers to Peter being “with the eleven” (2:14) after this. Compared with the same language in 1:26 it is clear that Luke considers Matthias to be part of the twelve.
- Luke refers to “the twelve” (6:2) long before Paul’s conversion.
- Paul was unique in his apostleship as one appointed “out of due time” (1Cor. 15:8-9). He sees his apostleship as being on a different plane than the others, though of equal authority.
- The lack of mention of Matthias later in Acts is immaterial since the only mention of any apostles after this are Peter, James, John and Philip.

<sup>74</sup> Consider Revelation 7:4, which describes the first century church as being (either literally or symbolically) composed of 144,000 Jews, twelve thousand from each tribe: “One hundred *and* forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel *were* sealed.” Thus James writing to the “brethren” (see 1:2,9,16; 2:1,5,14,15; 3:1,10,12; etc) can address them as “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1). Paul says, “not all Israel is Israel.” This is why Revelation 2:9 says, “I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.” That’s why Revelation 3:9 says, “Indeed, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not; but lie...” We need to get used to realizing that God does not have two brides, but one bride. He has one people, one temple, one olive tree, one vineyard, one field, one Israel, one church. Galatians can speak of the church as “the Israel of God”



prophesied at the first formation of Israel (Numb 11:25). The twelve plus the seventy is the core of the 120 in the upper room. But since a synagogue had to have a minimum of ten males, and God was symbolically establishing leadership among twelve tribes, God had 120 male “names” (Acts 1:15) ready to establish the new Israel, the minimum number to establish a new community. And this whole group of 120 was charismatically endowed. These additional prophets would provide guidance to churches all over the empire on the issue of the “mystery” of Gentiles being allowed into Israel without circumcision (see discussion of Ephesians 2-3 below).

Why did Jesus go out of His way to rename Simon as Peter (Peter means Rock) in Matthew 16:17-19? Was it because Peter was so strong? No. He was weak and as “Simon” had betrayed Christ (Luke 22:31-34). Several Reformed writers have pointed out that what made Simon a “Peter” (a rock) was the foundational revelation that had been given to him in the previous verses (Matt. 16:13-17). However, it is important to note that it was not only Peter who would be a foundation rock for the church. God established “twelve foundations” (Revelation 21:14) and added prophets to this foundation so that it became the “foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone” (Eph. 2:19-21). In Acts 1-2 God is laying a revelational foundation for the church by establishing a body of apostles, charismatically endowed elders, and prophets.

There are three Cessationist facts relative to this foundation. First, if Paul is considered to be an apostle appointed “out of due time” (1Cor. 15:8-9), and was eschatologically the “last” of the apostles,<sup>75</sup> then it argues that Acts 1-2 truly was foundational, and by implication within the “due time” that the foundation was laid. Second, this is reinforced when Peter interprets this charismatic endowment as taking place in the last days of the Old Covenant (“And it shall come to pass in the last days ... prophesy ... see visions ... dream dreams ... in those days; and they shall prophecy.”). The last days is not a period of time at the end of history, but is the last days of the Old Covenant, of the temple, the priesthood, the ceremonial law, the holy land, etc. The last days are the days leading up to 70 AD, when Israel would be scattered in judgment among the nations.<sup>76</sup> Third, this is reinforced by the fact that this

<sup>75</sup> See Peter R. Jones, “1 Corinthians 15:8: Paul the Last Apostle,” in *Tyndale Bulletin* 36 (1985), pp. 3-34 for an excellent discussion of this being an eschatological “last.”

<sup>76</sup> That the “last days” refers to a time in the first century can be seen from the following list of “last days” references:

charismatic endowment is followed by a description of the last days of Israel as a nation (vv. 19-20) and salvation to all, both Jew and Gentile (v. 21). The implication is that the charismatic endowments would not necessarily go beyond the last days. Like the Old Testament passages predicted, the extraordinary gifts would be only for the last days of the Old Covenant to ease the transition.

### *Ephesians 2:3*

Ephesians 2:19-21 is a very important text on the doctrine of Cessationism, and even Continuationist, Wayne Grudem, agrees that it is teaching some kind of Cessationism. Paul says, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

Paul is saying that the foundation of the church was being laid in the first century, and that this revelational foundation is made up of three parts: 1) Jesus Christ, who is the chief cornerstone of the foundation, 2) the apostles, who are part of the foundation and 3) the prophets, who are also part of the foundation. Even Wayne Grudem sees the significance of this passage as indicating that the apostles have indeed passed away. Just as you can't have multiple cornerstones and multiple Christ's in every century, you can't have multiple foundations in every century. This is why Paul said that he was the “last”<sup>77</sup> of the Apostles (1Cor. 15:7-8) and

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- a. “God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has *in these last days* spoken to us by His Son.” (Heb. 1:1) Christ's ministry was in the last days.
  - b. “But *this is what was spoken* by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass *in the last days*, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh . . .’ (Acts 2:16-17 i.e. Peter lived in the last days.)
  - c. “He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest *in these last times* for you.” (1Pet. 1:20) This indicates that Christ was born and lived in the last times.
  - d. James, rebuking the rich Jews who were persecuting the Jewish Christians predicts the destruction of their gold in 67-70 AD. In the middle of his denunciation he says, “Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped [notice the past tense, they have already done it] up treasure *in the last days*.” (James 5:3)

<sup>77</sup> As pointed out earlier, Peter R. Jones demonstrates that this was an eschatological “last” rather than a least.

an apostle “born out of due time” (Gal. 1:16-18). The very nature of apostleship necessitated an ending of that office. Since the apostles were the direct representatives of Christ on earth (Luke 10:16; Jn. 13:20) and since they were the only human foundation for the church (Eph. 2:20; Matt. 16:18-19), and since the foundation can never be laid again (1Cor. 3:11), it follows that there cannot be apostolic succession.<sup>78</sup> However, if apostles have ceased, then so have the prophets who are just as foundational. If chief cornerstones cannot be multiplied over 2000 years, then neither can the prophets grouped with that foundational cornerstone. But it is clear that whatever this passage is talking about was clearly intended only for the first century.

Wayne Grudem seeks to avoid the force of this passage with respect to prophets by wrongly applying the Granville Sharpe rule to this phrase. Thus, he interprets it to mean that “the apostles who are also prophets” have ceased in the first century, but not all prophets. His thesis is that only apostolic prophets have passed away. We will deal with this interpretation in Volume 2 of this series. Here it is sufficient to note three

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<sup>78</sup> This conclusion is further strengthened when the *Sheliach* nature of apostleship is understood. An apostle was a *Sheliach* who was directly commissioned and spoke in the name of and with the full authority of the one who sent him (Luke 10:16; John 13:20; Gal. 4:14). There are many apostles of the church, but there were only 12 + 1 apostles of Christ (parallel to the 13 tribes). This is necessarily so since in Hebrew thought, because a *Sheliach* could not commission another *Sheliach* to take his place. There can be no apostolic succession in Hebrew thought. Furthermore, the qualifications for being the twelfth apostle are given in Acts 2:21-26.

- 1) had to have witnessed Christ’s resurrection
- 2) had to have *been with* Christ
- 3) had to have been trained by Christ
- 4) had to have been with the other apostles

Paul recognized that the last qualification was not met by him and even though he vigorously defends his apostleship, he says that he was one “born out of due time” and therefore “the least of the apostles and not worthy to be called an apostle” (1Cor. 15:8-9). Nevertheless, in a miraculous way, God helped Paul meet the other qualifications and to be counted as an apostle “born out of due time.”

- 1) Paul was a witness of the resurrected Christ: “After that he was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then *last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.*” (1Cor. 15:7-8)
- 2) Before Paul met with the other apostles, he went to Arabia where he was with Christ for three years (Gal. 1:16-18).
- 3) During those three years Paul is jealous to defend his position that he was not taught by any man but by Christ Himself over that three year period (Gal. 1:12,16-17).
- 4) Thus Paul received his apostleship from Christ, not from apostolic succession (Rom. 1:5; Gal. 1:1,12,15-16)

things: First, the phrase, “apostles and prophets” speaks of something intended to only continue for the first century. Second, though the term “prophets” may include Old Testament prophets in its purview, it is clear that Paul especially had New Testament prophets in mind. This can be seen by his repetition of the phrase “apostles and prophets” in chapter 3:4-5, where Paul says that the “mystery... which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men,” “has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.” The word “now” indicates that Paul was including New Testament prophets in the phrase. Third, the whole section of 2:19-3:21 makes it clear that this was a revelational foundation to equip the church (see especially 3:3-6,9,10). All that was needed for the church to be built in succeeding generations was completely laid in the first century.

### *1 Corinthians 13:8-13*

1 Corinthians 13:8 says, “Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” (ESV)

This is a notoriously difficult passage to interpret, with numerous nuances of interpretation.<sup>79</sup> It is not the goal of this study to settle on one

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<sup>79</sup> Some of the differences of interpretation revolve around whether the reflexive verb for “will cease” that is used for tongues indicates a gradual cessation of tongues over time, or whether it is a co-terminus cessation with prophecy and knowledge. Likewise there are differences of opinion on whether the three gifts cease or whether the in-part-ness of the gifts ceases. Some see the “perfect” as the terminus point for the gifts, and others strongly disagree. And there are certainly differences of opinion about the meaning of “that which is perfect.” Some say the “perfect” has reference to the death of the believer and his transfer to heaven, others insisting that it is the Second Coming, still others the maturity of the church, others the maturity of the church in a given region (see concentric Cessationism), and others to the completion of the New Testament canon. There are also differences on the linear relationship of faith, hope, and love to the gifts. Do faith, hope, and love all outlast the gifts, or does only love outlast the gifts? What is the point of Paul’s example of immaturity in verse 11? Is prophecy and tongues an evidence of immaturity, or is immaturity only a metaphor for the great difference between our in-part revelation and the great revelation we will receive in heaven? What point is Paul making with the unclear mirror metaphor? Is it a reference to the unclarity of God’s revelation or

of those interpretations. Instead, we would note several objections that can be made to any Continuationist interpretation. First, the passage is clear that prophecy will cease sometime. While Non-Cessationists argue that the cessation occurs at the Second Coming, the fact that cessation is even mentioned is significant.

Second, the very mention of cessation should engage us in the hermeneutical principle of the analogy of Scripture. In light of Paul's claim that he had been "saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come" (Acts 26:22), and in light of Paul's praise for the Bereans for checking everything he taught against the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 17:11), and in light of how much the rest of the Bible speaks about cessation or prophecy, it is wise to interpret this unclear passage in light of the Old Testament passages that we have already examined. Any interpretive options that bring this passage into conflict with first century Cessationism flies in the face of clearly established Old Testament doctrine.

Third, while both Cessationists and Non-Cessationists<sup>80</sup> have often taken the "perfect" in verse 10 as the terminus point for the Cessationism of verse 8, it is by no means a necessary conclusion. Verse 10 can just as easily be taken as the terminus point of the partial nature of *all* prophetic revelation (verse 9), including the Scripture. Thus, it really does not matter what interpretation of "perfect" one takes in verse 10; one can still argue Cessationism and keep this passage consistent with the rest of the Scriptures we have looked at.<sup>81</sup>

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the unclarity we have without revelation? What connection is there (if any) between "putting away childish things" doing away with that which is in part (v. 10), and the ceasing of prophecy, tongues and knowledge (v. 8)? It is beyond the scope of this paper to argue these and other such questions.

<sup>80</sup> Some Cessationists have agreed with Charismatics that the terminus point for the charismatic gifts of verse 8 is the "perfect" of verse 10, but they argue that the "perfect" is either 1) the maturity of the church universal, 2) the maturity of the church in a region, 3) the completion of the canon, or 4) a cessation of the partial knowledge of first century Charismatics when they die and go to heaven.

<sup>81</sup> While the Greek word for "perfect" can technically be interpreted in the ways listed in the previous footnote, the author of this paper is quite willing to concede the point that the "perfect" is the Second Coming. However, he ties the "done away" of verse 10 only with the "partial" of all revelation in verse 9, whether that revelation is oral or Scriptural. However, it should be pointed out that the conclusions of this paper are not dependent upon taking any position on "perfect." I am indebted to my friend Dr. Robert Fugate for bringing to my attention that almost all scholars take the word "perfect" as a reference to the Second Coming: Donald A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), p. 71; F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, NCB, p. 128; Gordon Fee, *1 Corinthians*,

Fourth, note the following problems with the Continuationist position that the three gifts of verse 8 cease at the Second Coming. Verse 8 says, “if there is knowledge, it will vanish away.” This is a reference to supernaturally given knowledge. But does this special God-given knowledge pass away in heaven? That will be the time when we “will know” more than ever (John 14:20; Matt 10:26; Luke 8:17; 12:2). That is precisely the time when we are given knowledge we do not presently possess!!

Related to this is the knowledge of mysteries that prophets receive (13:2). The word “mystery” is simply the word “secret.” Deuteronomy 29:29 says, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of the law.” If a knowledge of a mystery is an opening of our understanding to something God has not chosen to reveal to the church in the Scripture (see God telling Paul that he is not authorized to tell the church about the mysteries he learned about heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:4), then surely the terminus of a knowledge of mysteries cannot be when we get to heaven! That is precisely the time that knowledge of mysteries will be given to *everyone*, not the time that they will cease being given. Prophets are given mysteries (1 Cor. 13:2) while on earth. But at the Second Coming we will be ushered into a time when the secret things of God will no longer be secret. Thus, interpreting “perfect” as heaven or the Second Coming may do justice to the contrast between the *partial* knowledge (vv 9-12) and the perfect

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NIC, pp. 643, 646, 649; Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 260, 262f; Archibald T. Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *1 Corinthians*, ICC, p. 297; George G. Findlay, *St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians*, EGT [n.d.; reprinted, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970], 2:900; Charles K. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, HNTC, p. 306; Frederic L. Godet, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 678, 680; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 662f.; Henry Alford, *Alford's Greek Testament [Alf]*, 4 vols. (1844–1877; reprinted, Grand Rapids, MI: Guardian Press), 2:588; Charles J. Ellicott, *St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1887; reprinted, Minneapolis, MN: James Family Christian Publ.), p. 259; Clarence T. Craig, *1 Corinthians*, IB, ed. George A. Buttrick, 12 vols. (New York, NY: Abingdon, 1953), 10:188, 193; Heinrich A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians* (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), p. 305; F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, originally in NIC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1953), pp. 309f; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First & Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (1937; reprint, Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1963), pp. 565f; Charles Hodge, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, Geneva, p. 272; John Calvin, *Commentary on The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, 2 vols. (reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 1:428; Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, TNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1958), p. 7:187.

knowledge (v. 10), but it does not do justice to the phrase in verse 8, “As for prophecies, *they will pass away*... if there is knowledge, *it will pass away*.” Does knowledge really pass away in heaven or at the Second Coming?

We could apply the same logic to tongues. When does the gift of tongues cease? It cannot cease at the Second Coming because that is precisely the time when every man, woman and child will not only be able to understand the “tongues of angels”, but will also be given a new tongue of their own. Zephaniah 3:9 says “For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language (literally “tongue”) that they all may call upon the name of the LORD...” If eternity ushers in the gift of tongues par excellence, then the ceasing that is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:8 must refer to a cessation of miraculous tongues in history rather than at the end of history. The tongues mentioned in the New Testament were a temporary stopgap measure of breaking the language barriers. Just as Adam and Eve were given a gift of instantly knowing how to speak in a new language, eternity will usher us into an instantaneous ability to speak a new language that we had not known previously.

Fifth, the temporariness of the three gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge is contrasted with the abidingness of the three fruits of the Spirit, faith, hope and love. Verse 13 says, “But<sup>82</sup> now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” This statement would make no sense if knowledge, prophecy, and tongues only ceased at the Second Coming because that is precisely the time when faith will give way to sight, and hope will give way to receiving. No contrast could be sustained between the abidingness of these graces and the non-abidingness of the gifts. Romans 8:24 says, “But hope that is seen is not hope.” Moffat paraphrases: “Now when an object of hope is seen, there is no further need to hope.” Knox paraphrases, “Hope would not be hope at all if its object were in view.” 2 Corinthians 5:7 and Hebrews 11:1-3 show that faith by its very definition will cease when we receive what we have had faith in. Now “we walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7), but in heaven faith as “the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1) will give way to seeing the things we have longed for. Thus, if faith and hope do not abide forever, but if they abide longer than the other gifts

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<sup>82</sup> It should be noted that the Greek word translated “So” (ESV), “And” (NKJV, NIV), and “But” (ASV, NASB) is the mild contrastive, δὲ. It puts what follows in contrast to what has been discussed.

mentioned in the chapter, then those other gifts logically must cease before faith and hope cease; they must cease before the Second Coming.

It is granted that there are many interpretive difficulties for everyone in this passage. But this is precisely why this unclear passage must be interpreted in light of the clear. If it has been demonstrated in this passage that prophecy and tongues cease before the Second Coming, and if other passages indicate that prophecy will cease in the first century, then one of the interpretive options that allows for a first century interpretation should be given preference. We will not dive into the question of whether tongues cease at the same time as prophecy (versus petering out over time), nor the distinction between the gift of tongues and an occasional ability to speak in tongues. In this book I am seeking to stick to what is exegetically clear.

*Revelation 10:7 and 22:18-19 with 2:20; 10:7-11; 11:1-14; 16:14; 19:20; 20:10; 22:18-19 and with 1:1; 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,9,12,20; 22:6.*

The last proof for the cessation of prophecy is in Revelation 22:18-19 and in chapter 10, verse 7. Revelation 22:18-19 says, “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: ‘If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.’”

There are several Cessationist considerations in this passage, and its immediate context of the book of Revelation. First, the book of Revelation is repeatedly called a “prophecy” (Rev. 1:3; 22:7,10,18,19), as are oral prophecies given in New Testament times (Rev. 11:6). Continuationist efforts to make a huge distinction between inspired Old Testament prophecy and so-called uninspired New Testament prophecy, simply do not stand. Nor do distinctions between written prophecy (1:3) and oral prophecy (11:6). I will have much more to say about this in volume 2. But this is a critical pillar in Continuationist literature that is disproved by this passage.

Second, God had previously used similar words to indicate the completeness of His moral code: “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.” (Deut 4:2) Subsequent books expounded upon the moral law, but did not add new laws. The moral law was complete with the Pentateuch. But in Revelation the context seems to be broader than adding to God’s laws.



There is good reason to believe that John is talking about adding to the revelation of Scripture. There are two reasons for thinking this:

First, there has been an earlier theme related to cessation of revelation. Throughout the book there is a conflict between true prophecy and false prophecy (Rev. 2:20; 16:14; 19:20; 20:10). There is also a reference to the cessationist passages already referenced in this paper when God says, "...in the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets" (Rev. 10:7). This mystery is the New Testament revelation of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, "which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets..." Eph. 3:3-5; cf. Rom. 16:25; 1Cor. 2:7; 15:51; Eph. 1:9; 6:19; Col. 1:26; 4:3; 1 Tim. 3:9). This mystery revealed through the New Testament apostles and prophets was about to cease, but it could not cease until the last judgment on Jerusalem. Thus Revelation 10:7 introduces God's commission to John to continue writing (10:8-11) and a description of the last two prophets (11:1-14) to prophesy in Jerusalem, "the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." This terminus of prophecy (by divine judgment on Jerusalem) was not 2000 years away but "must shortly take place" (1:1; 22:6), and must happen "soon" (2:16; 3:11; 22:7,12,20) in fulfillment of O.T. references to 70 A.D. (10:7). Notice also that Revelation is preoccupied with Jerusalem being judged for the blood of all the prophets slain (18:20,24; 16:6). Christ similarly says that "upon you [the generation then living] may come all the righteous blood shed upon the land ... all these things shall come upon this generation... behold your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:35-37). Thus the first reason to see Revelation 22:18-19 as a reference to cessation of revelation is that it matches earlier references to cessation of prophecy and the need for God's people to be warned about following Satanic revelation.

The second reason is that the book of Revelation uses the word "book" in a broader way than merely the scroll of Revelation (5:2f.; 10:1-11; 22:7,9,10). For example, before Revelation was completed, and certainly before it was distributed to the churches, the messenger tells John, "I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who are keeping the words of this book" (22:9). How could the saints be keeping the words of Revelation when it hadn't been given to them yet? On the other hand, if "book" includes the whole canon to which Revelation was being added, then the passage makes sense.

And indeed, we have already demonstrated in the first part of this book that the word “book” is used over and over again in the Bible to refer to everything God had written (Gal. 3:10). Thus, scribes who taught the Scriptures were said to teach “the book of the Law of the LORD” (2Chron. 17:9). Psalm 40:7 refers to the “volume of the Book” when it refers to Scripture generally. Isaiah tells people to “search from the book of the LORD, and read: not one of these shall fail.” Often the individual books of the Bible are referred to as the scroll of the Book (cf. e.g. Ezek. 2:9). Thus the singular word “book” was often applied to a body of scrolls (cf. e.g. Acts 7:42). Christ said that all the Scriptures wrote about Him, and Hebrews 10:7 words the same truth this way: “In the volume of the Book it is written of Me.” When Revelation 22 says that no one may add to the words of this book, it is doing something revolutionary. The “Book” of Scripture had been added to for thousands of years. But now God was saying, “No more. The canon is closed.” And that would not have surprised godly Jews since the Old Testament had repeatedly prophesied such a cessation of prophecy. As Revelation 10:7 says, “...in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.” This book has already outlined the various prophets who had predicted the cessation of the mystery of God in 70 AD. Since the book of Revelation was written prior to 70 AD,<sup>83</sup> the Biblical self-referential statements with regard to canon have been fulfilled completely.

### *Conclusion*

This first volume has preoccupied itself with the first part of the two-pronged apologetic task laid out in Proverbs 26:4-5. God says, “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him” (v. 4). If we are to be true to our axiomatic starting point, the Scriptures, then we must not start on neutral ground by arguing about the “evidence” of history and then reasoning to what might be the canon. This would be to allow something other than God to independently judge the Scripture. As Greg Bahnsen said,

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<sup>83</sup> More and more scholars are seeing that the evidence is overwhelming for a pre-70 dating of all the books of the New Testament. A conservative work that demonstrates this is Ken Gentry’s book, *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* (Tyler, TX: ICE, 1989). But even many liberals (who have tended to date all New Testament books very late) have conceded that the evidence is forcing them to a pre-70 AD dating for all the New Testament books. For a liberal work that demonstrates this quite convincingly, see John A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976).

Scripture teaches us that only God is adequate to witness to Himself. There is no created person or power which is in a position to judge or verify the word of God. Thus: ‘when God made promise to Abraham, since He could swear by none greater, He swore by Himself...’ (Heb. 6:13).

Accordingly, men are not qualified or authorized to say what God might be expected to reveal or what can count as His communication. That is why Scripture draws such a sharp distinction between ‘words which man’s wisdom teaches’ and those ‘which the Spirit teaches’ (1Cor. 2:13). The wisdom of man cannot be relied upon to judge the wisdom of God (1Cor. 1:20-25). Indeed, in its natural condition, man’s mind will always fail to receive the words of God’s Spirit: ‘the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God... he cannot know them because they are Spiritually discerned’ (1Cor. 2:14).

Only God can identify His own word. Thus God’s word must attest to itself...<sup>84</sup>

And we have seen that God’s word has indeed attested to itself. In this first volume I have given the Biblical axioms needed for the church to be able to recognize and defend the canon of Scripture. That the church of the first and second century did so is a matter devoted to a subsequent volume. But we have seen that there is a vast difference between determining the canon and recognizing the canon based on God’s own revealed principles. Canonization is a prophetic task. The prophets who wrote the Scriptures also canonized the Scriptures the moment they were written. Scripture is quite clear that neither individuals nor the church corporate had the authority to determine the canon. The opening of the canon, the giving of the canon, and the closing of the canon are all part of a prophetic function under God’s direct hand. And every step along the way God has supervised the process of canonization with a view to providing the New Covenant community with everything that they need for life and godliness. It is time that Protestants stop ceding ground to Romanists, Eastern Orthodox, Muslims, or Mormons by crediting the formation of the canon to the church. This first volume has therefore restricted most of its efforts to the first side of Presuppositional Apologetics – establishing our commitment to the self-referential statements of the Bible.

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<sup>84</sup> Greg L. Bahnsen, “The Concept and Importance of Canonicity,” pp. 3-4

## Part 2 – Answer a Man According to His Folly (Proverbs 26:5): Dealing With Objections

In a subsequent volume it is my desire to deal with the second side of the apologetic task, which is given for us in Proverbs 26:5 – “Answer a fool according to his folly lest he be wise in his own eyes.” Having established our commitment to the Bible’s self-referential statements, we can handle the objections of Charismatics,<sup>85</sup> Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Muslims, and Mormons, and show that on their own presuppositions, they cannot defend *any* canon with certainty. It is our hope that these studies will cause Christians to more consistently make the Scriptures alone our standard for all faith and practice.

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<sup>85</sup> We will be seeing that though Charismatics usually adopt the Protestant canon, their theology can easily be used to undermine the Protestant canon. The inconsistencies that abound on the subject of prophecy must be dealt with if we are to avoid all confusion on the subject of canon.

## Appendix A – Prophets Quoting Prophets As Scripture

To get a picture of the enormous number of quotations of the first five books of the Bible in the Prophets, see Stanley Leathes, DD, *The Law in the Prophets* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1891). This chart will just give a portion of the references to the books of Joshua and following...

### Prophet: Cited In:

#### Joshua

3:1,2-17 Mi 6:5  
 4:19ff Mi 6:5  
 15:15-19 Jd 1:11-15  
 16:10 Jd 1:29

#### 1Sam

2:8 Ps 113:7-8  
 23:19 Ps 54:0-50  
 Numerous references in  
 1Chronicles

#### 2Sam

1:20 Mi 1:10  
 22:1-51 Ps 18:0  
 Numerous references in  
 1Chronicles as well as  
 Psalms

#### 1Kings

8:47 Ps 106:6  
 22:2ff Mi 1:2  
 Numerous quotes in  
 2Chronicles

#### 2Kings

25:1-12 Jer 39:1-10  
 25:13-17 Jer 52:17-23  
 25:18-21 Jer 52:24-27  
 25:22-25 Jer 40:5-41:3  
 25:27-30 Jer 52:31-34

#### Ezra

1:1-2 2Chr 36:22-23  
 2:1-2:70 Neh 7:6-73

#### Psalms

2:4 Ps 59:8  
 7:14 Is 59:4  
 12:2 Mi 7:2  
 28:4 Lam 3:64  
 37:39 Na 1:7  
 42:3,10 Jl 2:17  
 72:8 Zch 9:10  
 77:17f Hab 3:10f

### Prophet: Cited In:

#### Psalms (continued)

79:10 Jl 2:17  
 103:9 Is 57:16  
 115:2 Jl 2:17  
 The quotes of Psalms from  
 each other, and other  
 prophets from the Psalms is  
 too numerous to put into  
 this chart.

#### Proverbs

1:7 Ps 111:110  
 1:16 Is 59:7  
 1:20f Mi 6:9; 8:1-13  
 10:2 Mi 6:10  
 22:14 Mi 6:10  
 24:24 Mi 6:10

#### Isaiah

2:2-5 Mi 4:1-5  
 2:15 Zph 1:16?  
 7:14 Mi 5:2-4  
 8:1 Hab 2:2  
 8:6 Ps 46:5  
 8:7f Ps 46:30  
 8:10 Ps 46:8,12  
 9:4 Ps 46:10  
 9:5 Mi 5:2-4  
 10:23 Zph 1:18  
 Nah 1:8  
 10:27 Nah 1:13  
 11:9 Hab 2:14  
 13:3 Zph 1:7; 3:11  
 13:6 Nah 3:10  
 Jl 1:15  
 13:7 Eze 7:17  
 Eze 21:12  
 13:8 Eze 21:3  
 Jl 2:6  
 13:9,11 Hab 2:9  
 13:20-22 Zph 2:13-15  
 13:21ff Zph 2:14  
 14:4f Eze 32:12ff  
 Jer 50:51  
 Hab 2:6  
 14:13ff Hab 2:9

### Prophet: Cited In:

#### Isaiah (continued)

15:1-7 Jer 48:5,36-37?  
 16:6 Zph 2:8,10  
 17:12ff Ps 46:3ff  
 18:1,7 Zph 3:10  
 21:2 Hab 1:13  
 21:6,8 Hab 2:1  
 21:3 Nah 2:11  
 21:6,8 Hab 2:1  
 21:9 Jer 50:2,38  
 Jer 51:33  
 21:10 Jer 1:33ff  
 Jer 51:33  
 22:5 Nah 2:11  
 24:1 Nah 2:11  
 24:2,4 Jer 23:10ff  
 24:17-18 Jer 48:43-44  
 26:21 Eze 24:8  
 28:22 Zph 1:18  
 30:8 Hab 2:2  
 32:13ff Mi 3:12  
 33:9 Nah 1:14  
 34:2 Jer 25:33ff  
 34:3 Eze 32:5f  
 Eze 39:11  
 34:5-8 Jer 46:10  
 34:6 Jer 25:31  
 Jer 51:40  
 34:6 Jer 25:31; 51:40  
 Eze 39:17-19  
 Zph 1:7ff  
 34:7 Jer 1:27  
 34:11 Zph 2:14  
 34:14 Jer 1:39  
 38:7 Mi 2:11  
 39:9-12 Mi 3:5-7  
 44:23 Jer 51:48  
 45:2 Jer 51:30  
 47:1-3 Jer 48:18-22,26  
 47:2f Nah 3:5  
 47:8,10 Zph 2:15  
 47:9 Nah 3:4  
 48:22 Is 57:21  
 50:2 Nah 1:4  
 51:19f Neh 3:4,7,10

## Prophet: Cited In:

**Isaiah (continued)**

|         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| 52:1,7  | Nah 2:1      |
| 56:6    | Jer 51:55f   |
| 56:9    | Jer 12:14    |
|         | Ezek 34      |
| 57:9    | Eze 23:40f   |
| 59:1-2  | Jer 5:25     |
| 59:9-11 | Jer 8:16     |
| 66:16   | Jer 25:31,33 |
| 66:19f  | Zph 3:10     |

**Jeremiah**

|       |           |
|-------|-----------|
| 5:21  | Ezek 12:2 |
| 10:25 | Ps 79:6-7 |
| 18:23 | Neh. 4:5? |
| 31:29 | Eze 18:2  |
| 32:20 | Neh 9:10  |

**Daniel**

|      |              |
|------|--------------|
| 9:4  | Neh. 1:5     |
| 9:5  | Ps 106:6     |
| 9:18 | 2Kings 19:16 |

**Hosea**

|        |           |
|--------|-----------|
| 1:4    | Jer 9:12  |
| 2:23   | Jer 30:22 |
| 3:5    | Jer 13:4  |
| 4:2    | Jer 7:9   |
| 6:10   | Jer 5:30  |
|        | Jer 18:13 |
|        | Jer 28:14 |
| 8:13   | Jer 14:10 |
| 9:9    | Jer 14:10 |
| 10:12  | Jer 4:3   |
| 14:1,4 | Jer 3:27  |

## Prophet: Cited In:

**Joel**

|        |               |
|--------|---------------|
| 1:15   | Is 13:6       |
|        | Eze 30:2f     |
|        | Zph 1:7       |
| 2:1-2  | Zph 1:14-15   |
| 2:3    | Eze 36:35     |
| 2:6    | Nah 2:10      |
| 2:10   | Is 13:10      |
| 2:11   | Is 13:3       |
|        | Zph 1:7; 3:11 |
| 2:13   | Eze 34:6      |
| 2:31   | Mal 4:5       |
| 3:10   | Is 2:4        |
|        | Mi 4:3        |
| 3:16   | Am 1:2        |
| 3:17   | Is 52:1       |
|        | Mi 4:3        |
| 3:18   | Am 9:13       |
| 4:14   | Zph 1:7       |
| 4:15ff | Is 13:13      |

**Amos**

|         |             |
|---------|-------------|
| 1:2     | Jer 25:30?  |
| 1:3-5   | Jer 1:23-27 |
| 1:13    | Zph 2:8,10  |
| 1:13-15 | Jer 49:1-6  |
| 2:2     | Zph 1:16    |
| 2:5     | Is 8:14     |
|         | Hos 8:14    |
| 2:10    | Hos 12:9f   |
| 5:5     | Hos 4:15    |
| 6:12    | Is 10:4     |
| 8:8     | Is 4:3      |
|         | Hos 4:3     |

## Prophet: Cited In:

**Obadiah**

|     |                    |
|-----|--------------------|
| 1-6 | Jer 49:9,10, 14-16 |
| 10  | Jl 3:19            |
| 11  | Jl 3:3,17          |
| 15  | Jl 3:4             |
| 17  | Jl 2:32; 3:17      |

**Jonah**

|     |           |
|-----|-----------|
| 3:9 | Joel 2:14 |
|-----|-----------|

**Micah**

|      |           |
|------|-----------|
| 3:10 | Hab 2:12  |
| 3:12 | Jer 26:18 |
| 4:6f | Zph 3:19  |

**Habakkuk**

|         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| 1:5f    | 2Kings 21:12 |
|         | 2Chron 33:18 |
| 2:20    | Zph 1:7      |
| 3:10-11 | Ps 77:16-18  |

This list of Scriptures is a summary of a larger list given by David Lang. Some scholars put many more allusions, but these are fairly strong allusions from one part of prophetic Scripture to another.



## Resources Available from the Publisher

- Cummings, Tim. *Ministerial Training: The Bible's Normative Pattern*.
- Davis, Andrew. *Written on Your Heart: An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture*.
- Elliot, Michael (Ed.). *Bible Acrostic: An Aid to Memorizing the Content of Every Chapter of the Bible*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Biblical Romance: What Does the Bible Say About Courtship & Betrothal?*
- Kayser, Phillip. *The Canon of Scripture, Volume 1: Biblical Presuppositions*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Church Membership: Is It Biblical?*
- Kayser, Phillip. *December 25 Jewish Style: The Ancient Jewish Celebration Anticipating the Birth of Christ*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Dressed Up for Church: A Contrarian Rag on Appropriate Clothing*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Feed My Lambs: Biblical Guidelines for Parents to Determine if Their Children are Ready for Communion*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *The Flaw of Natural Law*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Getting Christians Back Into Politics*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Glory and Coverings: A Study of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *An Hour of Prayer: A Practical Guide to 12 Kinds of Prayer*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *How to Deal with Objections to Inerrancy*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Is the Death Penalty Just?*
- Kayser, Phillip. *Leader Development: A Mentoring Checklist for Sons and Young Men*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Mature Daughters: A Mentoring Checklist for Daughters and Young Women*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *The Problem of Evil: A Dialogue*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Public Assembly: The Biblical Call to Faithful Attendance at Public Worship*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Ransom Paid: Does the Bible Limit the Atonement?*
- Kayser, Phillip. *Ruins of Athens: The Curse of the Athenian Model of Education*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Seeing History with New Eyes: A Guide to Teaching Providential History*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Seven Biblical Principles that Call for Infant Baptism*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Sunday as a First-Day Sabbath*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Torture: A Biblical Critique*
- Kayser, Phillip. *Universal Suffrage: A History and Analysis of Voting in the Church and Society*.
- Kayser, Phillip, & Bubeck, Mark. *Prayers for Spiritual Warfare*.
- Kayser, Phillip, & Pickering, Wilbur. *Has God Indeed Said?: The Preservation of the Text of the New Testament*.
- Rose, Ben Lacy. *Baptism by Sprinkling*.

Visit [www.biblicalblueprints.org](http://www.biblicalblueprints.org) for additional resources.





# The Canon of Scripture, Volume I

## Biblical Presuppositions

Phillip Kayser, Ph.D.

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In this fascinating work on canon, the author seeks to defend the Protestant canon of 66 books without recourse to extra-Biblical evidence. He begins the book by saying, “The Bible should be the starting point and ending point for all Christian doctrine, including the doctrine of canon.” And he demonstrates that the Bible does indeed thoroughly address this issue. Volume 1 is a major contribution to canonical studies. It paves the way for Volume 2, which will take on all competing views of canon presented by Muslims, Mormons, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Liberals.

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Founder and President of Biblical Blueprints, **Phillip Kayser** has degrees in education, theology, and philosophy. Ordained in 1987, he currently serves as Senior Pastor of Dominion Covenant Church, a conservative Presbyterian (CPC) church in Omaha, NE. He also serves as Professor of Ethics at Whitefield Theological Seminary and President of the Providential History Festival. He and his wife Kathy have 5 children and 9 grandchildren.



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