

1 **The Canon of Scripture**

2 **What is the Canon?**

- The word *canon* comes from a Greek word meaning “measuring rod.”
- The canon of Scripture is the list of books that are accepted as God’s Word.

3 **The Need for a Canon**

- In the first several decades of the church’s existence, many books were written about Jesus and Christian doctrine.
- As the church battled heresy, it became clear that agreement was needed on which of these books had authority.

4 **The Formation of the Canon**

- Christians accepted the Jewish Scripture as God’s Word, calling it the Old Testament.
- Standards for inclusion of books in the New Testament canon
 - Was it written by an apostle or someone close to an apostle?
 - Is it widely used in Christian worship?
 - Does it have power?

5

- Many books, such as the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, were never seriously considered for inclusion in the canon.
- Most New Testament books were accepted practically from the start.
 - The four gospels
 - Acts
 - Paul’s epistles
 - 1 John
 - Revelation

6

- Other books were more controversial.
 - Some were eventually accepted.
 - Hebrews
 - James
 - 1 and 2 Peter
 - 2 and 3 John
 - Jude
 - Others were not
 - The Shepherd of Hermas
 - Letter of Barnabas
 - Revelation of Peter
- The canon as we have it was fixed by about 400.