

**Class Objectives** – After this class you will be able to:

- Explain a historically informed conservative view of the OT and NT Canon.

**Key Terms:**

- Canon
- Prophet / Prophecy
- Apostle
- Council

## Orthodoxy and Heresy — Canon and New Testament Theology

### I. Introduction to Canon (cont.):

- A. Recent Challenges to the NT Canon

### II. The Old Testament Scriptures and the New Testament Canon:

- A. OT Canon already recognized by the NT period  
cf. Josephus, *Against Apion* i.38-42; 4 Ezra 14:42-48

1.

**Josephus, *Against Apion* i.38-42 (= §8)**

8. For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but *only twenty-two books*, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, *but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time*; and how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, *no one has been so bold as either to add any thing to them, to take any thing from them, or to make any change in them; but it is become natural to all Jews immediately, and from their very birth, to esteem these books to contain Divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be willingly to die for them.*

2.

**4 Ezra (= 2 Esdras) 14:37-48**

(37) So I took the five men, as he commanded me, and we proceeded to the field, and remained there. (38) And on the next day, behold, a voice called me, saying, "Ezra, open your mouth and drink what I give you to drink." (39) Then I opened my mouth, and behold, a full cup was offered to me; it was full of something like water, but its color was like fire. (40) And I took it and drank; and when I had drunk it, my heart poured forth understanding, and wisdom increased in my breast, for my spirit retained its memory; (41) and my mouth was opened, and was no longer closed. (42) And the Most High gave understanding to the five men, and by turns they wrote what was dictated, in characters which they did not know. They sat forty days, and wrote during the daytime, and ate their bread at night. (43) As for me, I spoke in the daytime and was not silent at night. (44) *So during the forty days ninety-four books were written.* (45) And when the forty days were ended, the Most High spoke to me, saying, "*Make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first and let the worthy and the unworthy read them;* (46) *but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise among your people.* (47) For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge." (48) And I did so.

3. Matthew 5:17

4. Luke 24:44

5. 2 Timothy 3:16

**B. Limits of OT Canon predicated in part on the cessation of widely attested prophesy**

cf. Josephus, *Against Apion* i.41 (above); 1 Macc 4:45-46; 9:27; 14:41; see also *b.Sanh.* 11a (cf. *b.Sotah* 48b; *b.Yoma* 9b; and *t.Sotah* 13:2; *Song R.* 8.9.3 – all traditions about Hillel); *Prayer of Azariah* 15; possibly 1QS 9:11

1. "succession of prophets"

"Thus there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them."  
(1 Maccabees 9:27)

"And the Jews and their priests decided that Simon should be their leader and high priest for ever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise..." (1 Maccabees 14:41)

2.

**Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin**

Our Rabbis taught: Since the death of the last prophet, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the Holy Spirit [of prophetic inspiration] departed from Israel; yet they were still able to avail themselves of the *Bath-kol*. Once when the Rabbis were met in the upper chamber of Gurya's house at Jericho, a *Bath-kol* was heard from Heaven, saying: "There is one amongst you who is worthy that the *Shechinah* should rest on him as it did on Moses, but his generation does not merit it." The Sages present set their eyes on Hillel the Elder. And when he died, they lamented and said: "Alas, the pious man, the humble man, the disciple of Ezra [is no more]."

C. Jesus and the Apostles reopen the church's sense of recognized revelation.

1. Jesus as prophet  
e.g. Matt 13:57 (and parallels); 14:5; 21:11; Mark 6:15
2. Jesus as revelation  
e.g. Heb 1:1-2; John 1:1ff.
3. Apostolic authority  
e.g. John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Cor 7:25; 14:37; 2 Cor 13:3; Eph 2:19-20; 2 Pet 3:15-16; Rev 22:18-19

### III. Early Church Canonical Lists (and their reasoning):

#### A. *Muratorian Canon*

Eusebius, *Church History* iii.25

Athanasius 39<sup>th</sup> Festal Letter (A.D. 367)

Canon of Synod of Hippo Regius (A.D. 393) & Canon of Third Synod of Carthage (A.D. 397)

1. councils
2. canonical discussion

### IV. Questions for Consideration:

1. What key points arise from the discussion of the passages in Josephus and 4 Ezra regarding the canon of the Old Testament?