

## *“Setting the Record Straight”*

### The Development of the Canon of Scripture

Various Scriptures

The Rev. Ted Wood

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**Ted:** The Lord be with you.

**Brave Men:** And also with you.

**Ted:** Lord Jesus, by the power, the miraculous power of Your Holy Spirit you took Your word, God’s word, and gave it to us. You transmitted it to us, even in the face of great opposition from the evil one who did not want to see us have that Word in our hands. Today we have that Word. And by that Word we are not only instructed and built up, but we are actually transformed and made anew by regeneration. We pray today that as we study that transmission of that Word from Your mouth to our hands that we will grow in grace and that our lives will be changed. We pray this in Your name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Ted:** Okay. Well, Don was a great help to me. We arrived back in the country on Tuesday evening. And it was one of those trips that went smoothly. But I was convinced more than ever that you don’t want to fly anymore; it is just too hard. But actually all the connections went well. And so Sig said that Jeff is not able to teach.

**Sig Tragard:** Jeff’s at the Synod by the way.

**Ted:** Yeah; that’s fine.

**Sig:** Okay.

**Ted:** And so I still have a little bit of jet lag today. But Don, I’m grateful; thank you. And Don was a huge help in rehearsing with me the things that Jeff had been teaching over the last several weeks while I’ve been gone. Right now my only challenge is to remember to drive on the right-hand side of the road. *(Laughter)* For three weeks all you’re thinking about is “left to live.” And so when you pull over onto an intersection, stay to the left. So that’s okay; I’ve only drifted into the left one time. My wife said, “What are you doing?” *(Laughter)*

So anyway I want to talk about the development of the canon of Scripture. In the last three weeks—the last five weeks, actually—you’ve talked an awful lot about how to read the Bible and all the aspects of that. As I often do, a lot of my stuff that I teach is Bible study. But it also has history and theology. For some of you I know it’s just give us lots of Bible. But I hope to do that today. And I’m just going to follow the outline there. And please, let’s talk; let’s ask questions.

But the whole idea of how the Scripture—and this is the New Testament Scripture—came into being from when Jesus was teaching and Paul was teaching, and how we actually have this today is amazing to me. It’s the story of the Spirit working through His church to make this possible. Our lives were all changed forever when God gave us the grace to understand this. And so this is critical.

In our church I’ve been teaching the book of Exodus; I’ve finally finished up after a year-and-a-half. It changed a lot of the way I think—not in any profound way, but in a more insightful way about God’s word. And the verse that kept coming to mind was that verse from Matthew 4 where Jesus is tempted by Satan about turning the stones into bread. And Jesus replied, “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds*” or comes out of “*the mouth of God.*” And that verse kind of shortened up for

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me as I thought and thought about it. And it says, “Men shall live by every word that comes out of the mouth of God”—every word that comes out of the mouth of God. So last time I talked about the importance of the 76% of the verses in the Bible from the Old Testament; every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. So that we know is absolutely critical to our life. Without this Word we have no life, no real structure or substance.

And that’s reinforced in 2 Timothy the third chapter and the sixteenth verse; you all know that. “*All Scripture is breathed out by God.*” That’s how the ESV translates it. All Scripture is breathed out by God, inspired by God. It’s probably more like expired by God because it’s *ex* (breathing out), *ex Spiritus*—the Spirit going out of you. And the word there for Scripture is “the writings,” the *graphe*. Graphite is the substance that we write with, and it’s very graphic; you can see it very clearly. So that’s the Greek word in the New Testament for Scripture; it’s *graphe*. And all it means is the writings. Later it came to mean the Scriptural writings.

So all Scripture is breathed out by God. And God did that when He breathed out into Adam and Adam became a living creature. When God’s word is breathed out into us we come alive. So it’s the same kind of thing.

But the question becomes, how did we get the New Testament writings—the *graphe*—and who determined which *graphe* would be recognized as the word that comes out of the mouth of God? I mean, a lot of people say, “Well, I’ve got the Bible; I believe this.” Well, how did this end up like this? I mean, we can talk about it starting with Tyndale’s translation and this kind of thing. But I’m talking about much earlier stuff. I’m talking about the first three hundred years of the church.

So that is the question I was tackling. And I have it here and I’m going to go over this. I’m saying that this is the most likely chronology of the New Testament events in Scripture development. You see that; it’s a chart there. I like this kind of thing; you may not care for it. But I like looking at things. I take notes every time my pastor preaches. I’ve got shelves in my brain. I just put things on those shelves and I organize things in my brain all the time. So I like charts a lot.

So let’s just go over this. Now this dating is the best that scholars can come up with. I mean, you don’t read romans; you don’t have an ancient manuscript to unroll it, and at the bottom it said, “Copyrighted 55 A.D.” (*Laughter*) We don’t have that. But we have scholars that specialize in writing styles that date a document. They’ll look at a document and they’ll see that the *s*—the *sigma* in Greek—is written in a certain way. And then fifty years later it’s written in another kind of way. There are people who are experts at this. I can’t imagine what that would be like, to be an expert in that. But this is the kind of thing that helps us, plus the internal evidence, and also the evidence of the Christian leaders who were writing at that time. And we’ll look at some of that.

But let’s just go through this. Once again, there are approximate new theories are being brought forward all the time. But 6 to 4 B.C. is the birth of Jesus. Then in the early 30s A.D. Jesus is crucified, resurrected and ascended. The day of Pentecost comes and the church receives the very Person of Jesus in the form of the Holy Spirit. Then probably around 35 Paul is converted on the road to Damascus. Then at 48 to 49 we have the famous Council of Jerusalem. Do you remember that in Acts 15? It’s very important point on the Christian Church time line, because what happened at that council where the elders and the apostles gathered together in Jerusalem and responded to a question that

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Paul was bringing along with Barnabas from Antioch. The Christians at Antioch, the church there, had a question, and they brought it to the council—the apostles and the elders at Jerusalem.

And what was that question? Come on; just fire.

**Brave Man:** It was what is required of Greeks to come to the faith?

**Ted:** Right.

**Brave Man:** Should they be circumcised, or whatever?

**Ted:** Yes, right. Can Gentiles—non-Jews—actually be inheritors of God’s promise through Jesus? And what do they need to do to be saved? Do they need to keep the what?

**Brave Man:** The Mosaic law?

**Ted:** The Mosaic law; do they need to be kosher, or not? And that was a critical issue because what it said was that the individual churches were not coming up with their own interpretations. They were submitting them to people of a recognized authority and eldership, and that’s what they did. And in Acts 15:11 Peter says to the assembled elders and the apostles, *“We believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus just as the Gentiles will.”* So Peter was saying that it’s not by circumcision; it’s not by keeping kosher laws. Indeed we were saved by the Lord Jesus Christ. And he didn’t add this, but he could have added through faith and trust in Him. And in the same way that’s exactly how the Gentiles will be saved—all non-Jews. So that was a critically very important council; it freed up the gospel message for the world. Up to that point it was a big question mark as to whether Gentiles would be included.

Then from the early 30s into the 50s and beyond Christians are meeting. They’re gathering and they’re sharing the gospel with each other. There’s preaching, there’s prayer, there’s the breaking of bread. And Christians are meeting in home churches. They’re still meeting in synagogues and in open air meetings to hear the gospel message presented orally. So there’s nobody showing up with a Bible or a scroll at these meetings. They are sharing the witness of what they have heard beginning with the apostles’ witness to them.

It’s hard to imagine being in a church gathering where you would not have a Bible in front of you, but they did not. There may have been, and there has been speculation that there was an early document prior to the first Gospel. But that has never been found and it’s completely theoretical. But it’s an interesting kind of environment. Yes, Sig?

**Sig:** But Ted, would they bring out the Old Testament scrolls?

**Ted:** Absolutely; thank you.

**Sig:** Explaining what Jesus might have fulfilled?

**Ted:** Thank you, Sig; I should have said that; that’s exactly right. There would absolutely have been the reading from the scroll of the Torah. And even as they met in synagogues, because at that point Christians were simply a sect of Judaism. And as the Torah scroll was unrolled and paraded around, and then put down on the reading stone and was read, then as you know any Jewish male who had been *bar mitzvahed* could stand up and give an interpretation or an understanding. So there was the reader, and then after the reading they would sit down. And that’s where we get Jesus reading from the Torah. And He says, “Today this reading from Isaiah has been fulfilled.” That was His commentary on it.

In the same way preachers might get up. And they would say, “This is what the prophet says. And we know the Person about whom the prophet is speaking. It’s Jesus—

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Yeshua—the itinerant Preacher and carpenter’s son from Nazareth.” And that’s kind of how it went in the synagogue and in small house churches. And also they would gather in open air spaces. There wasn’t a lot of persecution at this time.

Then the first writings that we get are Paul’s letters. There’s 1 Thessalonians in the early 50s, then 2 Thessalonians. And still in the early 50s there is Galatians. On into the mid-50s there’s 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, and by the end of the fifth decade we get James, then Philemon, Philippians, Colossians and Ephesians. (It’s getting a little harder to turn pages these days.) 1 Timothy, and then by the 60s we have the first Gospel.

So up to this time Christians are meeting. They’re having fellowship; they’re praying; they’re reading from the Old Testament Scriptures. They are now reading letters that are being circulated within the churches. By the early 60s you have the Gospel of Mark, the first time the Gospel appears. So the letters came before the Gospels did, as best we know. Then Titus and 2 Timothy. Probably about this time Paul is put to death and martyred in Rome during the Neronian persecutions. I think they took place around 66 and 67. Peter is writing in the mid-60s, then the letter to the Hebrews, whoever wrote that. There have been several theories about who wrote Hebrews, but we don’t know. It used to be considered Paul’s letter. But it doesn’t really sound like Paul and there’s nothing in it that says it’s Paul. Then 2 Peter, and Peter is martyred probably near the end of the 60s.

Then in 70 we have the second Gospel—Matthew—followed by Luke, followed by Luke’s second follow-up hit book which is Acts. (*Laughter*) That’s great! Don’t you love Acts? I am so grateful that God decided to have Acts written because there is just so much stuff we would not know had Acts not been written.

Then Jude. Then finally, near the end of that century, we have the Gospel of John, 1 2 and 3 John in the early 90s, and finally the book of Revelation. I’m not convinced that Revelation was written by the apostle John, but that’s up for debate.

And then in the late 90s the Jews have what is called the Council of Jamnia. Now a lot of you have never heard of this. But this is really important, because in the Council of Jamnia they did two things. It was a gathering of the leaders and the elders of the Jews in Israel and in Judea. And at that council they determined two things. We don’t know everything that went on because we don’t have any minutes of what went on in the meeting of that council. But this is the top Jewish leaders.

And a number of things were going on in Judaism, because they were saying, “wait a second! This Christian sect has gotten really big. And they’re beginning to intrude on some of our traditions and the ways we understand how things should be done. So we need to set the record straight. Let’s get our top guys together and set the record straight on Christians. The first thing we’re going to do is that we’re going to establish what is Hebrew Scripture so somebody doesn’t bring a letter from Paul to one of our synagogues, and then claim that might be Scripture. We’re going to say that only the books of the Old Testament up until Malachi, only those are Scripture.” They actually rejected the Apocrypha, which is an interesting thought when it comes to the Roman Catholic Bible.

That’s the first thing they did. And the second thing is that they added to the Jewish prayers said in the synagogues curses upon Christians. So starting around the late 90s what happens is that Christians really can’t go to worship in the synagogue anymore. And Christianity and Judaism split at that point because the synagogue becomes a hostile environment, because you don’t want to be a follower of Yeshua—Jesus—praying, and

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then all of a sudden the rabbi curses you. That’s not a good church environment. And so that forced the Christians to form their own churches.

By about 200 or before or a little after, we have the near unanimity of what constitutes the New Testament. So from the first writings of Paul in the 50s until the early 200s there is a lot of flux going on as to what Scriptures, what writings, what *graphe* are Christian Scriptures.

Then fast forward to 325 A.D.: the Council of Nicea, the first ecumenical council. Now *ecumenical* comes from *oikumene*—everybody that’s in the household. And so this was the first gathering ever where all the Christian leaders in the Roman world gathered together at a place, outside of the present-day Istanbul in Turkey. And they had a meeting there to determine some important things. And we thank God every day that they met, because it became very clear what was true Christianity and what was not. The most important issue was who is Jesus Christ, and how did the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son relate to one another?

And at that time there was a strong movement in Christianity—Arianism—taught by a priest from Alexandria, I think, that Jesus was not truly God; He was less than God. Being the Son of God made Him less than God the Father. And up against him came a deacon, Athanasius. And they argued and they hammered it out that indeed Jesus was and is “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary.”

So that was all nailed out. And at the end of that statement made by all the leaders—and there were actually some bishops who came from Great Britain, which is great that we were represented,--

**Sig:** Whoa, whoa; Great Britain didn’t even exist then.

**Ted:** Well, Britannia, okay; the Roman province of Britannia.

**Sig:** Okay.

**Ted:** They didn’t include the Scots, because we can never outdo the Scots. But so out of that came the end of that, which is not found. If you say the Nicene Creed in your churches this part is not found. But at the end of it there was an anathema, that is, a curse on all those who did not believe that. So it was a very strong statement. And up to that point we would say that only about 1/3 of the Christian leaders truly believed that Jesus was one substance with the Father—three Persons, one God. And there was only about 1/3. But that changed things because then the guys who believed otherwise became *persona non grata*. Just as a sidebar a lot of those guys fled into the German territories that the Romans had not conquered. They converted a lot of the Germanic tribes to think as they did, that Jesus was less than the Father. And then when the Germanic tribes invaded Rome in the 300s and the 400s, then they brought all this heresy back into the Roman Empire. So it was quite a battle that went on.

So besides being an interesting story, the only reason that I mention Nicea is because you will hear a lot of people say, “Oh, the Christians didn’t agree on what was actually in the New Testament until Nicea.” That is simply not true; I see that repeated again and again. The official decision and declaration of what was in the word of God in the New Testament did not come until 397. That was the official statement. But in fact Christians were in agreement since the 200s. So let me just stop there for a moment if you have any

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thoughts or questions. Does this all seem irrelevant or unimportant? I actually think it’s fascinating.

**Jim Hamilton:** The Holy Spirit was powerful.

**Ted:** Yeah, right. I mean, how else did this happen? Thank you, Jim. I should have emphasized that the Holy Spirit was part of it. He was guiding His church in all of this, so that in the end the true word of God triumphed and is what we have today. Yes, Don?

**Don Maurer:** Ted, I’ve read that maybe there were some disputes by around the 200s. But even early in the church, in the 100s or so, people were certainly convinced that the epistles of Paul were Scripture.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Don:** And that the Gospels were Scripture.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Don:** Maybe there was a little bit of a dispute about a few other books.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Don:** But we don’t want to give people the impression that nobody really knew what Scripture was till the 200s.

**Ted:** Right; I don’t want to leave that impression at all. Did you all feel that I was saying that—that it was all kind of up in the air until the 200s? No, it was not. And the question is how do you know that? And I want to get into that. But thank you, Don. No, it was not up in the air. The Gospels and the Epistles—most of them—were accepted as being God’s word within the churches. Any other questions, any other thoughts? Okay.

So #5. How were the Scriptures transmitted from God who was the ultimate Author to God’s chosen men, that is, those who wrote the Old Testament, the Gospels and Epistles? This is where we get attacked by Muslims on this issue, because they said, “Well, our man—actually Mohammed—heard from the angel Gabriel. The angel Gabriel was sent by Allah”—God, their God—“and he gave the Scriptures to Mohammed in his listening. And Mohammed then, who was illiterate, went and recited those words to his followers and they wrote them down.”

So it was direct oral transmission—well, not direct; there were several steps. So from Allah—God—to Gabriel the archangel to Mohammed, from Mohammed to his followers because Mohammed could not write it down. And so they say, “You see, our God gives us the direct word.” And within the space of what?—a day or two or three, it’s already written down. So Muslims believe in the oral transmission of God’s word, that it can be written down in that fashion.

It’s interesting that you find a similar kind of idea as you look at medieval manuscripts, things written as early as 800 or 900 A.D. in Europe. I wish I had enough space here; I would have given you a picture. What you have is this. They show a cubicle, and there is Luke. And he is writing down the Scripture, the Gospel. And above him is an angel talking into his ear. And the medieval manuscript artist has a pen in his right hand. “Did I get that one right?” And there was that kind of way of looking at it.

Mormons have a similar kind of understanding of how their Book of Mormon was transmitted. As you will remember, Joseph Smith in the 1820s went out to a grove in Palmira, New York to pray. And he said, “I don’t feel that any of the religious denominations today are true. God, please show me.” It’s sort of complicated; it’s even complicated to shorten it. But he was visited by an angel. And he saw God the Father,

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God the Son and God the Holy Spirit—three persons in three different bodies. And they told him where to go to look for the Scriptures that came after the Bible.

So there were additional Scriptures, in the same way that Mohammed said that the Koran was after the Bible. So “we believe this book, but we have the final word.” The Mormons say, “We believe this book. But we have a final word, a more final word than that.”

And he was directed to a hill, Hill Cumorah in Palmyra, NY. It’s a big Mormon site outside of Rochester. And he was told to dig and he dug up plates, golden plates. And on those plates was basically the Book of Mormon. And they were written in what Joseph Smith called “Reformed Egyptian.” No one has any idea what that means, but that’s what he called it.

But he could not read it. And so what he did was that he took that into his house. And he had certain followers that came in with him. He would put a curtain between his followers and himself. Joseph Smith would sit at a table with those plates—this is all according to him,—and he would take a stone. He called it “the seer stone.” Earlier he’d use that same stone to look for buried treasure. Treasure hunting was a big thing in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. And he took that stone and he put it into his top hat. And then he buried his head in the hat and looked at the stone. And he said,—don’t laugh!—that characters would emerge for each letter of to set reformed Egyptian on plates. He would look through, and then a translation would appear right after that.

**Sig:** So you’re saying that both the Muslims and the Mormons believe the Bible.

**Ted:** The Mormons say they believe the Bible as it is accurately translated.

**Sig:** But all the things that we read, they would interpret it differently?

**Ted:** Well they would, because they have a book that gives them the correct understanding.

**Sig:** Even the Muslims.

**Ted:** Yes, absolutely they would say that; yes.

**Don:** They believe the Old Testament. They wouldn’t believe the New Testament.

**Ted:** Well they do as well, because they believe what is called the Injil, which is the Arabic word for gospel. They call them “the people of the Book.” They believe the writings of the people of the Book. The people of the Book are Jews and Christians. And Mohammed specifically said to believe in the Injil, which is the gospel. Yes, sir?

**David Miller:** But they also believe that the New Testament that we have today has been corrupted.

**Ted:** Yes; that’s correct. There’s no evidence of that, but they still say that. That’s a key point with Muslim missionaries. So in any case, we’re talking about direct transmission of God’s word. It’s a normal process for us. And we’ve got to be happy and satisfied with that process.

So how were the Scriptures transmitted from God, the ultimate Author, to His chosen people? It was through Jesus’ body which is the church. In John 16:13 Jesus said, “*When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come.*”

So I believe that the Bible is authentic based on God’s promise that the Spirit, when He came, would lead the church into all truth. The Greek word for “you” is plural there.

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Together He would lead us into all truth. And that’s exactly what I think happened in the final product which is the Scripture.

**Sig:** So Ted?

**Ted:** Yes?

**Sig:** Are Mohammed and Joseph Smith equating themselves with Jesus? I’m here; here’s the truth?

**Ted:** No. Mohammed would say he was a prophet. Jesus was a prophet; Moses was a prophet; Abraham was a prophet. There have been innumerable prophets who have brought God’s words and warnings to people. And it’s always interesting, because here’s the problem with that. It’s always the purpose of the prophet to warn God’s people and to get them in line with what God says is true in God’s word.

But that’s the problem, isn’t it?, because we don’t have a problem knowing what God says; we have a problem with doing what God says. So what that assumes is that if you hear God’s warning and direction, you will be able to do it.

**Don:** Yeah, right.

**Ted:** And that is simply not being honest. Even if you didn’t believe in God that would not be an honest assessment, because each one of us knows. I mean, God knows I know enough to live by the light. So why am I not doing it? It’s because I have a deeper problem; it is a spiritual, heartfelt problem. I have a carnal, fleshly problem that’s in rebellion against God and actually hates what God has to say; that’s my problem. I need to be born again. I don’t need more information.

And that’s why Christianity is different from every other religion in the world, because every other religion provides instruction on how to be better. And we get that; we certainly get that in the letters. But we know that’s not the solution, because we can never be good enough. The Jehovah’s Witnesses have a similar kind of theology.

I’ve told you the story before. They came to my door. When they were finally through with their routine I knocked them off of their story. I needed to get them off track. Before they start they have a whole series of questions. So I said, “Well you know, Jesus said that you must be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect. How are you doing?”

And they stammered; it really threw them off track. And I said, “Really, that’s what Jesus said. I know you believe that Jesus said that. But how are you doing?”

And I would say the same thing to a Mormon. “How are you doing?”

“Well, I’m trying.”

“Well, He didn’t say that. He didn’t say that you must try to be perfect as your heavenly Father is; you must be perfect. So how are you doing?”

And then the woman said, “Well you know, when Christ comes to reign again in His millennial rule I’ll have enough time to get it again.” *(Laughter)* Unlikely!

**Sig:** What if she dies before the millennium?

**Ted:** Well, they believe they’ll be brought back, so it’s like that. And in Islam there are lots of loopholes to get through. So anyway, any other thoughts?

In the development of the New Testament canon there is the necessity of apostolic authority. That means that what was being transmitted was from the apostles. And that authority and that position of apostles was so important. You see it in Acts 1:21-22. This is where the apostles are meeting after Judas hung himself. And Peter is saying, “Well, we need not to have eleven apostles, but we need twelve.” “*So one of the men who have accompanied us during the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning*



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*from the baptism of John until the day that He was first taken from us, one of these men must become with us a witness of His resurrection.”*

This is just fascinating. They put the emphasis on the necessity of those who had seen Jesus alive from the dead—not that Jesus died for your sins and you accept Him as your Savior, but that in Jesus we have the Fellow that had overcome death. That was the most critical message. And if you read the sermons in the Acts of the Apostles this is the reoccurring central theme: the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

I read this in Ephesians 2:19-20. Hear what Paul says to the Christians: *“You are fellow citizens with the saints, and members of the household of God.”* Now what is the household of God built on? What is the church built on?

**Sig:** Christ.

**Ted:** No. Interestingly enough, it’s built on what? The foundation of what? *“The apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.”*

Of course the church is built on Jesus Christ. But the role of the apostles and the prophets that pointed to Jesus, and the apostles who were witnesses of the Resurrection, which Jesus was really all about. His primary mission was to resurrect from the dead and break the power of death. That was built on the foundation of the apostles. Hence the importance of Peter saying, “We need to have another apostle.” And that was Matthias.

And it’s interesting that I’m doing my personal devotions in 1 Corinthians. I am amazed at how many times Paul insists on his own apostleship. Romans 1:1: *“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel.”* The first line in almost every epistle is “Hey, guys! What I’m about to write to you is that I have the authority because I am an apostle, not because I’m a learned scholar or because I know the Bible really well, or because a lot of people like me, or that I have 30,000 people show up in my sanctuary every Sunday. I am an apostle, one of those who witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

**Sig:** Ted, just one clarification. People today in modern-day churches in leadership call themselves apostles.

**Ted:** Right. They’re wrong.

**Sig:** That doesn’t—

**Ted:** Yeah; they’re just wrong.

**Sig:** You have to be a witness of the Resurrection.

**Ted:** Right. Or you have to be a fellow traveler or a student of one of those apostles.

**Sig:** But wouldn’t that pass down?

**Ted:** Give me a moment. I’m getting there, okay? You don’t have this, but write down 1 Corinthians 9:1-2. Here Paul goes off again in the middle of 1 Corinthians. *“Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?”* “Some of you guys have a problem with me. Some of you don’t believe what I’m saying. You’re not receiving my letters. But I’m going to tell you something. I’m an apostle because I’ve seen Jesus Christ.” And I think that siting must have been on the road to Damascus.

But he goes on to add another stipulation in this section 9:1-2. *“Are you not my workmanship in the Lord?”* “Not only have I seen Jesus, but I’ve got results. And that is you in your conversions, and you’re coming to faith.” See, he brings this up again and again. And he says, “There are those who don’t think I’m an apostle.” *“If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you”*—Corinthians. *“For you are the seal of my*

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*apostleship in the Lord.*” “I’ve not only seen the Lord alive, resurrected from the dead. But also your lives have been changed as a result of my witness of the Resurrection.”

In 1 Timothy he says something very similar. I didn’t put it in there: chapter 2 verse 7. *“For this I am appointed a teacher and an apostle. I am telling the truth; I am not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.”*

So it’s interesting that he starts off with that. “I’ve been appointed by God to be a teacher, but also an apostle.” And right after that he adds, “Hey, I’m telling the truth; I’m not lying.” The thing he was insisting on was not that he was not lying about being a teacher and being a very wise preacher and everything else. He was insisting on being an apostle, because the apostles had seen the prima facie evidence of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that indeed He had resurrected from the dead.

**Sig:** What was that last passage?

**Ted:** 1 Timothy chapter 2 verse 7. So why were these testimonies and teachings of the apostles that were written down so critical to this message? Well, for three reasons. #1. And I quote from Paul in Romans 15: *“I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain.”*

To Spain? Paul made it to Spain? Maybe; probably not, but maybe. The gospel preaching was rapidly spreading throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. So it was not possible to be enough apostolic time and energy to get out and witness to everybody. There had to be something beyond that. And that’s one of the reasons that the apostles’ teaching and testimony was committed to writing.

There is good reason to believe that the apostle Thomas made it to India. In fact today the church in India is called “The Church of Mar Toma”—Mar, Aramaic for Saint, and Toma—Thomas. They believe their church was founded by St. Thomas, by Thomas the apostle as he went out to India. Yes?

**Sig:** I’m in this man’s office (pointing to Dr. David Wessel) having dental work at the University of Pittsburgh with a dental assistant from India. And we were talking about Jesus. “Well how do you know about Jesus in India?” And she said just what you said.

**Ted:** The Christian church in India goes back to the time of the apostles.

**Sig:** I was blown away.

**Ted:** Isn’t that amazing? So it got beyond what the apostles themselves could take care of. So they had to put what they’d said in writing. That was the first thing.

The second thing comes from Acts 1:1 and 8. Jesus had given command through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen. *“You will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.”* So not only were the apostles being stretched beyond what they had the ability to cover, but they also were dying out. Every one of the apostles, save one, died a martyr’s death. Who was the one who did not die a—

**Sig:** John.

**Ted:** He died on Patmos.

**Bryan Whittington:** The one Jesus loved.

**Ted:** The one whom He loved, right. Isn’t that interesting? So he died. But every one of them was martyred. James was sawn in two. Peter was crucified head-down. Church history says that he was condemned to be crucified. He said, “I am not worthy to die as my Lord. Please crucify me another way.” So they crucified him upside down. Peter, Paul, all put to death—beheaded, this kind of thing. It is very costly when Satan is raging against you.

## ***“Setting the Record Straight”***

So the apostles were dying out. And then finally, Jesus warns, “*Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing.*” And that was the rise of false teachings and heresies in the church, where somebody is saying, “Okay, good book. I’ve got the correct take on this one. I like what Paul said in that letter you have to the Ephesians. I like that, but you need to understand it correctly.” That would be a false teaching.

The two greatest false teachings in the first century and into the second were what was called Gnosticism, which said you had to have secret knowledge that only a few were initiated into to really understand the teachings of the gospel. And the second heresy was that certainly you don’t mean to say that you are saved just by faith in Christ—by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Certainly you don’t mean that! There’s something that we’ve got to do, right? There’s something we must add to that. We can add on to what God has done just to be sure, right? And those were two of the earliest heresies.

There came other ones: Montanism and Marcionism. Marcion said that there were two gods. There was the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. The God of the Old Testament was a God of wrath and anger and lots of hard rules. The God of the New Testament was love and grace. Does that sound like anything you’ve heard? I actually heard somebody say that the other day. “This is what God said.”

“Well, where was that? That was in the Old Testament. We don’t believe in that God anymore. We believe in the God of Jesus—love and mercy and grace.” Read the sections in Matthew.

**David Wessel:** We don’t teach from the Old Testament.

**Ted:** That’s what I’m saying; it’s 76% of the Bible. So anyway those are the reasons why the testimony and the teachings of the apostles had to be written down.

So what were the criteria for the *graphe*—that means the writings—to be embraced as the Holy Scriptures on a par with the Old Testament? That was the claim that was being made. The claim that was being made was that the writings of Paul, the writings in Hebrews, the Gospels, they were on a par with the Torah—the Torah that in the synagogue services was taken out of a special box—the chamber—and lifted up and paraded around. And the Jewish men who wore prayer shawls would raise it up and touch the Torah and kiss it. I mean, that was reverence. Do you mean to say that the letter to the Ephesians is on an equal par with that?

So how was it determined which of these writings that were circulating were going to be considered part of that revered word of God? First of all the *graphe* was apostolic, or from a close companion of the apostles in its authorship. It had to trace itself back to the apostles or one of their companions. An early writer, Papius, writes that Mark was a companion of Peter and that he wrote down what Peter said. That’s a very early 2<sup>nd</sup>-century history.

The second thing is that the *graphe* was read in church and quoted as Scripture by church leaders. We already have in 2 Peter that Paul’s writings were seen as “*the other Scriptures*” early on. But they had to be read. And actually in one of the early documents it said in the Muratorian fragment in 170 A.d., “We don’t allow the following writings to be read in church, because we’re really not sure that they’re apostolic.” So there was already a screening process that was going on. If you’re not sure that the apostles or one of their close companions wrote this, then we’re not going to read it in church.

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And we begin to understand what they considered Scripture by looking at what or who some of the early authors were quoting. If they’re quoting Paul as if it were Scripture, we believe that person believed it was Scripture. In fact, I think on your last page or two you’ve got a chart which has different authors and different leaders who were quoting those various books of the Bible as Scripture.

And thirdly, did the *graphe* contain the gospel core? That means the bodily resurrection of Jesus, Jesus the Son of God and promised Messiah, Jesus the sacrifice for sin, and fourthly salvation by faith in God’s Son. And Paul lays this out in 1 Corinthians 15. I don’t have that there, but verses 3-8. *“I delivered to you as of first importance that I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then He appeared to more than five hundred,”* etc. So right there it’s saying that these are the most important things. If you’re not hearing these things,--

Oh, we have a Scripture here. Did you not know? It’s The Shepherd of Hermas, which was a very popular book at that time. Well, does it have these elements in it? Well if it doesn’t, if it’s teaching something strange, it’s probably not the word of God. So they were testing it against this core message.

And finally, the *graphe* stood up to long-time scrutiny. In a lot of the church today we take things that come along that are novel, that work, that are applicable, and we kind of make them authoritative. They took time to figure this stuff out. They took decades and decades and decades to be sure they got what is in this book right. And therefore it took a while—and Don alluded to this—for books like Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and perhaps some others, to be included in Scripture. And it also took time not to include books like “The Shepherd of Hermas,” which is like the book of Revelation. They did not have that in the Scripture with some of the other books. In that final chart he gives us several of the different books that were being used. It’s amazing how many different Scriptures were kind of being passed around at that time. I’m just trying to think what else was very popular: “The Epistle of Barnabas.”

**Brave Man:** The Gospel of Thomas.

**Ted:** The Gospel of Thomas; thank you for mentioning that. People make a big deal about the Gospel of Thomas. It’s written quite late; it’s about 150. It’s obviously Gnostic. I’ve read it, and it’s very strange. It came out of a big library they found in the desert in Egypt. It didn’t have the core; none of the core teachings were in there. What it was—

**Don:** Very strange teachings.

**Ted:** It’s very strange teaching.

**Don:** I’m sorry, Ted.

**Ted:** No, that’s fine.

**Don:** For example, Peter said, “How can Mary Magdalene follow us? She’s not a man.” And Jesus says, “Well, I’ll make her a man.”

**Ted:** That’s right. In time, when God ruled, women would be made men. 21<sup>st</sup>-century unbelievers and skeptics make such a big deal of The Gospel of Thomas, which had no impact on the early church.

There were other ones as well. But you don’t see them in the Bible.

**Sig:** How do you spell Hermas?

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**Ted:** H-e-r-m-a-s. That pretty much concludes what I wanted to say. It may not have been your cup of tea, but I find it fascinating. Any thoughts at this point before we break out? Yes?

**Don:** You alluded to this. 2 Peter 3 regards Paul’s writings as Scripture.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Don:** I believe it’s somewhere in 2 Timothy; it’s either in 2 Timothy or 1 Corinthians; 1 Corinthians 9, I believe. It’s where Paul says that Christians should give. And he says, “*Do not muzzle the ox.*”

**Ted:** Yes.

**Don:** “*The Scripture says, ‘Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,’ and ‘The laborer deserves his hire.’*” Well, the first quote was from the Old Testament; the second one is what Jesus says. So around that time already the words of Christ in Luke’s Gospel were regarded as Scripture.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Brave Man:** I just wanted to point out something about the number of the apostles. In the book of Revelation there are twelve thrones that the apostles sit on. Nobody is going to be sitting on their laps. (*Laughter*) From my understanding the word *apostle* is the same word for *diplomat*. The authority can’t be negotiated by someone less than an apostle.

**Ted:** That’s right. The word *apostolos* means “one sent out.” (*Unclear*) I just wonder, because people sit in the pews. They’re sitting there with this book. Do they think that it dropped from the sky. If you’re a Muslim you think that God dictated this. And if you’re a Mormon you think that God dictated this. But we don’t think God dictated this. We feel that God was working by His Spirit through the church. And through His apostles and leaders He gave us what we have today. And it was a process that probably took about 100 years. But I believe it’s true. Why? Because Jesus promised that He would lead us to all truth. And if this is not true then Jesus is not telling the truth; it just comes down to that. Any more thoughts? Okay, grace and peace to you. We’ll see you next week.

**Brave Men:** Thank you. (*Applause*)