**Systematic Biblical Truth
God’s Word: Preservation of Scripture**

1. Introduction

 A. What questions does the preservation of Scripture answer?

 B. God’s promise to preserve Scripture.

 1. Isaiah 40:8; 1st Peter 1:24-25

 2. Isaiah 59:21

 3. Psalm 119:89

 4. Matthew 5:18; 24:35

 5. Luke 16:17

 C. God inspired the writers. God preserves their writings.

 D. The acceptance of the Bible being the word of God requires faith. One will not
 accept the Bible as the word of God unless the Holy Spirit reveals it to them.

 1. Deuteronomy 29:2-4

 2. 1st Corinthians 2:7-12

 E. The two areas of concern in Scripture preservation:

 1. Canonicity.

 2. Textual Criticism.

II. Canonicity.

 A. Definition-- Canonicity is the criteria for determining what literature should be
 included into the canon of the Bible.

 B. Differing views.

 1. Roman Church (Catholic)—The church decides and decided which writings
 would be included in Scripture. The church is the authority.

 2. Evangelical—God is the authority on which writings are to be included in the
 canon through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit guided His people
 to recognize the writings are from Him. No church council can grant authority,
 they are already authoritative.

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|  **The Authority Relationship Between Church and Canon** |
| ***Incorrect View*** | ***Correct View*** |
| The church is determiner of canon | The church is discoverer of canon |
| The church is mother of the canon | The church is child of canon |
| The church is magistrate of the canon | The church is minister of canon |
| The church is regulator of canon | The church is recognizer of canon |
| The church is judge of the canon | The church is witness of the canon |
| The church is master of the canon | The church is servant of the canon |

 B. Basic premises:

 1. The writings of Scripture were accepted as Scripture by the original hearers at
 the time of reception.

 2. The earliest references to the books assumes them to be authoritative.

 C. Principles of canonicity: *How did believer become aware of what God had done?*

 1. **Was the book prophetic?** (“a man of God” 2 Peter 1:20)?

 A book in the Bible must have the authority of a spiritual leader of Israel (O.T
 prophet, king, judge, scribe) or and apostle of the church (N.T. – It must be
 based on the testimony of an original apostle.) This was the most
 fundamental criteria.  Once this was established, the book’s inspiration was
 recognized.

 2. **Was the writer confirmed by acts of God?**  If there were doubts about the
 author’s being a true prophet of God, miracles served as divine confirmation.

 3**. Did the message tell the truth about God?** Any teaching about God contrary
 to what His people already knew to be true was to be rejected. Furthermore,
 any predictions made about the world which failed to come true indicated that
 a prophet’s words should be rejected.

4. **Does it come with the power of God?** Another test for canonicity was the
 edifying effect of a book. Does it have the power of God? The Fathers believed
 the Word of God is “living and active” ([Heb. 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.%204.12)), and consequently ought
 to have a transforming force for edification ([2 Tim. 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.%203.17)) and evangelization
 ([1 Peter 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet%201.23)).

5. **Was it accepted by the people of God?** The initial acceptance of a book by
 the people to whom it was addressed is crucial. Paul said of the Thessalonians,
 “We also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of
 God’s message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really
 is, the word of God” ([1 Thess. 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.%202.13)). For whatever subsequent debate there
 may have been about a book’s place in the canon, the people in the best
 position to know its prophetic credentials were those who knew the prophet
 who wrote it. Hence, despite all later debate about the canonicity of some
 books, the definitive evidence is that which attests to its original acceptance by
 the contemporary believers.

 D. Additional support

 1. Old Testament Canon – Recognizing the correct Old Testament books

 a. Christ refers to Old Testament books as “scripture” (Matthew 21:42).

 b. The Council of Jamnia (A.D. 90) officially recognized our 39 Old
 Testament books.

 c. Josephus, the Jewish historian (A.D. 95), indicated that the 39 books
 were recognized as authoritative.

 2. New Testament Canon – Recognizing the correct New Testament books

 a. The apostles claimed authority for their writings (Colossians 3:16;
 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Thessalonians 3:14).

 b. The apostle’s writings were equated with Old Testament scriptures
 (2 Peter 3:1, 2, 15, 16).

 c. The Council of Athenasius (A.D. 367) and the Council of Carthage
 (A.D. 397) recognized the 27 books in our New Testament today as
 inspired.

III. Textual Criticism.

 A. Answers the question *How do we know the writings we have are correct? Do they
 match the original autographs?*

 B. Reason for Textual Criticism—We do not have any of the original manuscripts.

 C. Through textual comparison, the critic can confidently determine what the original
 writings contained.

 D. Important texts:

 1. The oldest complete Hebrew text is the Masoretic text (900AD).

 2. The Septuagint (Greek translation of the O.T.) 200-150 BC.

 3. Oldest O.T. Septuagint copy 325AD.

 4. The Dead Sea Scrolls (Most 200BC.)

 5. Vulgate (Latin) 400 AD by Jerome.

 6. Peshitta (Syriac) 1st oldest translation of entire Bible: O.T 150AD; N.T.
 425AD.

 7. Thousands of fragments (99% of the original writings have been reclaimed
 N.T.).

 C. Process of Textual analysis.