

Bible Study # 4
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Proof of the Bible Series (Part 4)—How the New Testament Came Together

In this Bible study we **will see how the New Testament came together**. We have been talking about how we got our Bible, the Bible as we know it, and how the Scriptures came to be. We have been focusing in on the Old Testament, and how it came to be. Last time we went through Ezra and Nehemiah, the conclusion of the Old Testament and what gave us our canon of Scripture. There was a conclusion to the books, as inspired by God and preserved by the Jews. The books that they recognized as sacred had not been added to since the time of Artaxerxes in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Deuteronomy 18:15, "...a Prophet like me..." and One who would give law. This was something none of the other prophets did. They had no authority to add to or take away from the Law of Moses. There was this prophecy, "that One like Moses," and that was Jesus Christ.

Acts 7:37, "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him shall you hear.'"" —Showing that all these prophecies referred to Jesus Christ.

The same statements were referred to back in Acts 3:20-22, "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him shall you hear in all things whatever He says to you.'""

—"Like me...Him shall you hear."

Verse 26, "To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities." The emphasis is that all these prophets referred to Jesus Christ—like Moses in a way that no one else ever was. What does it mean to be a prophet like Moses? Moses gave Law. Moses was responsible for the canon of Scripture laid up in the ark. God used Moses to write Scripture and to give Law. Let's notice a prophecy in the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 8:14, "He will be as 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." Who is this referring to?

Turn briefly back to Romans 9:23, "and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory."

Verses 32-33, "Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him shall not be put to shame.'" That stumbling stone refers, of course, to Jesus Christ.

I Peter 2:4-8, "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.' Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious but to those who are disobedient, 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,' and 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.' They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed."

This is quoted from Isaiah 8:14, "He will be as 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."

—Referring to Jesus Christ.

Verses 15-20, "And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken.' Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples. And I will wait on the Lord, who hides His face from the house of Jacob; and I will hope in Him. 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. And when they shall 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? 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."

To the law and to the testimony—that expression or statement is utilized various times. For instance, in Revelation 12:17, "...the rest of her offsprings, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ," and

in other places in Revelation it refers to the Law and to the testimony (Revelation 12:11; Revelation 19:10; Revelation 1:2, 9; Revelation 6:9).

Isaiah 8:16, “Bind up the testimony, seal the Law among My disciples.” *The testimony would be bound up, and the Law would be sealed among the disciples of Jesus Christ.* “Bind up” means “to canonize, to seal, to set it apart.” The testimony and the Law would be set apart. The testimony and the Law would be set apart as authentic and genuine among whom? —The disciples of Jesus Christ! It was not going to be canonized by the Catholic Church. It was to be sealed by the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 42:21, “The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness’ sake; He will magnify the Law and make it honorable.” Jesus Christ would magnify the Law.

Notice Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law, or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” —To fill up to the full! He was coming to magnify the Law. He was not coming to destroy it or do away with it.

Verse 18, “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” —Not one jot or tittle. Then He begins to magnify the Law.

Verses 21-22, “You have heard that it was said...but I say to you....”

Verses 27-28, “You have heard...but I say to you....”

Verses 31-32, “Furthermore it has been said...But I say to you....”

Verses 33-34, “Again you have heard...But I say to you....”

Verses 38-39, “You have heard...But I tell you....”

Notice as we go on through, and you find again a sixth place where He says in vv. 43-44, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”

—Bless them that curse you.

Verse 48, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” —Be completely spiritually mature. He goes on focusing on different things. He is magnifying the Law. He says, ‘This is what you have always been told, but I say to you.’ He was making it more binding. It is not enough to keep the letter of the Law. He taught the spirit of the Law. He

magnified the Law. He did come, and He did magnify the Law.

In Isaiah 8:16, the Law was bound up by His disciples. In the beginning they did not feel a need to preserve what Jesus said and did because they expected His return soon.

The last question they asked Him, Acts 1:6, “...‘Lord, will You at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?’”

Verse 7, “And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.’” They expected Christ to return in their lifetime (including the Apostle Paul), but as time went on and as they got further along, it was apparent—the awareness began to dawn on them—that there were things yet to be done. As a result, certain records began to be set down.

II Peter 1:12-15, “Therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.”

The story of who was responsible for giving us the New Testament, as we have it, is not that different than what Ezra and Nehemiah faced. It was because of the Samaritans and their trying to subvert and water down the truth of God. It was their opposition and their antagonism that caused Ezra and Nehemiah to set apart these books.

Was there anything like this in the New Testament? Yes, there was—in Acts 8:9-11, Simon the Sorcerer (the magician) known in history as Simon Magus. The Samaritans looked to him as God’s representative on earth.

Acts 8:12-13, “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.”

We are going to see what he believed a little later. He was amazed at the things Philip did.

Verses 17-18, “Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money.” He offered them money. He tried to make a deal. He said, ‘I want this office.’ He was trying to buy an apostleship.

Verse 19, “saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’” He said, ‘I want the office that you hold; I want to be able to do that.’

Verse 20, “But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money.’” He told him to take his money and where to go with it.

Verse 21, “‘You have neither part nor portion [KJV, “lot”] in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.’”

“You have neither part nor lot.” What does that expression mean? Notice what the apostles said after Judas had committed suicide.

Acts 1:24-26, “And they prayed and said, ‘You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.’ And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

Acts 8:21, “‘You have neither part nor portion [KJV, “lot”] in this matter....’” It was a reference to the apostleship.

Verse 20, “...‘Your money will perish with you....’”

Verse 21, “‘You have neither part nor portion [KJV, “lot”] in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.’” You have not been chosen nor designated by God.

Verse 23, “‘For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.’” –The bond of lawlessness. He looked into Simon and saw that he wasn’t in any way repentant. He was bitter against the Government of God. He was caught up in an attitude of contempt toward the Law of God.

Verse 24, “Then Simon answered and said, ‘Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.’” He said, ‘I hope all those terrible things don’t happen.’ He didn’t repent.

Simon loomed rather large on the horizon in church history. He was the religious leader of the Samaritans. What was their religion? They practiced the Babylonian Mystery Religion. They paid lip-service to the God of Israel but attached that to their old pagan religion. They kept doing the same things but called it by the name of God.

John 4:19-22, “The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain [Mount Gerizim, in Samaria], and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is

the place where one ought to worship.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.’”

Jesus made it very plain that you don’t look among the Samaritans for the truth of God. They used God’s name, but they didn’t even know anything about the name of God. Don’t look to the Samaritans for what they preserved. Don’t look there; look to the Jews. They are the ones who have the responsibility of preserving the text. It is among these Samaritans that we find Simon the Magician. He thought he was the great one. He tried to buy an apostleship.

Later we read where Paul talked about those who were false apostles.

II Corinthians 11:13, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.”

John also talked about them in I John.

I John 2:19, “They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us, but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.” That is who he was talking about.

The interesting thing to note, concerning the Samaritans and the Jews, there is another comparison. When the Apostle Paul went out into the Greek-speaking world, primarily he went where the Jews were. It really started out by being preached to those who were familiar with the Law. Three hundred years earlier was the dispersion (Greek, “*Diaspora*”)—the scattering of the Jews during the time of Alexander the Great. That served as the nucleus around which the Church of God was built.

There was another group of people who were dispersed in the ancient world—the dispersion of the Samaritans. Rome and Alexandria, Egypt were the two major areas where the Samaritans settled.

It is interesting to note that when we come across a church in the second century, as the curtain lifts from the time the New Testament closes, we find a church that calls itself Christian, but it’s not doing the things we find practiced by Jesus and the early apostles. It was a church that used the name of God and Jesus Christ, but was, in reality, following the same old Babylonian Mystery Religion. It was none other than the church that Simon the Sorcerer was responsible for founding. It was the outgrowth of what Simon did among the Samaritan colonies.

There are many warnings in the New Testament. It was a time of confusion. Let's go back to II Peter. He was writing in the latter part of the 60s A.D.

II Peter 2:1-3, "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber."

Peter was talking about false prophets—those who would mislead. There are these warnings. The Apostle Jude gave a number of these warnings.

Jude 3, "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 to the saints."—Again, writing in the late 60s A.D. So even thirty-five years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Jude was telling the Church to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered.

Verse 4, "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." There was a false message being taught, turning the grace of our God into lewdness and denying the only Lord God.

Notice here in vv. 11-12, "Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves; they are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots." There are spots in your feasts, twice dead. He speaks here of these individuals who were a source of contention, a source of problems. The Church was told to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered.

Christ said He would bind up the Law among His disciples (Isaiah 8:16).

II Peter 1:12-14, "Therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding

you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me." "Tent"—he was referring to his mortal body.

Verse 15, "Moreover *I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.*" He said, 'I am not going to be negligent. I know that I am not going to be alive much longer, but I am going to endeavor that after I die, you will have all of these things in remembrance.' How could Peter do this?—By having these things written down and set apart as canon of Scripture.

I want you to notice something we always read right over.

Verse 16, "For we did not follow cunning devised fables...."

Verse 15, "Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder...." He switched from first person singular to first person plural. He switches from "I" to "we."

In vv. 12-15, Peter used "I"; in vv. 16-18, he used "we." Who is the "we" to whom he is referring?

II Peter 1:17-18, "For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mount."

To whom is "we" referring? It is very plain this "we" refers specifically to Peter and John alone, and I can prove that.

Let's go to Matthew 17:1-9. "We" refers to those who were in the mountain and heard, "This is My beloved Son."

Matthew 17:1-2, "Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, brought them up on a high mountain by themselves, and was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light." Does that sound like Jesus back in Revelation 1 in His glorified state?

Verse 5, "While He was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'"

Verses 3-4, "And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'" They saw a vision (v. 9).

Matthew 16:28, "'Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His

kingdom.” They saw Jesus coming in His kingdom.

In Matthew 17:1, Peter, James and John went up into a mountain six days later, and they saw Christ, in glorified form, coming in His Kingdom and saw Moses and Elijah (Church and State) resurrected in a vision (v. 9). They heard that (v. 6). It was a vision, and Jesus told them not to say anything about it.

Matthew 17:9, “...Jesus charged them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no one, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.’” Who was there? Three men: Peter, James and John. Go back to Acts.

Acts 12:1-2, “Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.” A few years into the New Testament period (about thirteen years after the crucifixion) James was killed.

In II Peter 1, there were only two other men still alive.

In II Peter 1:16, when Peter said, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty,” this “we” can only refer to Peter and John, the only two people still living who had heard the voice. Notice something about Peter and John.

Verse 19 (KJV), “We have also a more sure word of prophecy....” We have the authoritative word of prophecy.

Verse 20, “knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation.” Peter and John were responsible for the canonization of the New Testament. They were the ones to whom were given the authoritative word of prophecy. Peter was responsible for the first canonization of Scripture, and about thirty years later, John was responsible for the last canonization of Scripture. We are the ones who have the sure word of prophecy (v. 19).

Verse 16, “For we [Peter and John] did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made know to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”

II Peter 2:1, “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”

‘There were false prophets, but we [Peter and John] are the ones you listen to. We are the

ones that God has given that authority to—to say what is inspired of God and what is not. We are the ones that God has given that authority to.’ Just read church history and all the spurious accounts.

II Peter 2:3, “By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words....” Covetousness was the actual motive of those who tried to subvert.

Verses 4-5, “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly.”

Verses 9-10, “then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.”

They despise government and church authority. That has been a stumbling block in our day. They didn’t want to be told what to do. They wanted to do what they wanted to do. Peter was very quick to call “a spade a spade.” He had a way of being very blunt and to the point.

Jude 8, “Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.” –Just as in our time and, as we saw, with the Samaritans. Satan hasn’t changed his tactics.

Verse 10, “But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.”

Verse 12, “These are spots in you love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves; they are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.”—Clouds without water.

II Peter 2:12-13, “But these like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you.”

People were coming in trying to fellowship with God’s Church and yet using that opportunity for

fellowship to try and subvert with their own deceptions.

Verses 14-15, “having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practice, and are accursed children: They have forsaken the right way and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.”

Verses 17-19, “These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, to whom the gloom of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through licentiousness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption, for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought in bondage.”

They promise them liberty. Peter makes it very plain.

Notice II Peter 3:1-2, “Beloved, I now write this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior.”

This is referring to Scripture—the prophets and the apostles. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone, and He is what the Bible is all about. He personified the Bible and lived it totally and completely.

There are several interesting things that come out in this. We noted before that as the Jews count the Old Testament, there are twenty-two books. There are twenty-seven books in the New Testament. When you add the twenty-seven and twenty-two, you come up with forty-nine—seven times seven—God’s number of completion and perfection.

If you take the four Gospels, which tell the story of Jesus Christ’s life, and Acts, which continues that story of what Jesus did through the Church (in those five books), the story of Jesus is the focal point. There are twenty-two books before and twenty-two books after those five books. Christ is the center of the Bible—the focal point. He is the chief cornerstone.

John wrote five books of the New Testament—the last books written—the Gospel of John, I, II, III John and Revelation. He outlived all of the other apostles by thirty years. If you take out John’s Books, how many remain for Peter to have canonized? —Twenty-two! Exactly the

same number as already existed in the Old Testament canon. Then, thirty years later, five final books were added by John.

In II Peter 1:15, he says that he is going to be sure, after his decease, to have these things always in remembrance. How? —By setting down an authoritative canon of Scripture. But he made it plain that he was not the only one with that authority. Thirty years later, after the scene had changed, John had five more, which brought the total to twenty-seven. With the twenty-two of the Old Testament, it made God’s perfect number, and it also represented the seventh period of canonization. 1) The time of Moses, 2) Solomon, 3) Isaiah and Hezekiah, 4) Josiah and Jeremiah, 5) Ezra and Nehemiah, 6) the time of Peter and then, 7) the Apostle John put the final books in as the Greeks preserved it. God, over a period of centuries, working seven distinct periods of time, put together a book that consists of seven times seven. There is a logical flow and it finishes out with eternity in Revelation.

II Peter 3:2, “that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior.” He makes it plain the people were to accord the same to these Scriptures as they had with the Old Testament.

Verses 3-9, “knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.’ For this they willingly forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which now exist are kept in store, reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

God has a time plan. Peter began to expound that. Peter is writing in the late 60s A.D. Peter could see that Jesus Christ was not coming back in their lifetime. Peter begins to go through and explain. God has a time plan. He is not slack concerning His promises. It is not that God has forgotten about what He said. In that time plan a day is as a thousand years.

Verses 13-15, “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found of Him in peace, without spot and blemish; and account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you.” There is a definite article there.

Verse 16, “as also in all his epistles speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.” Notice the fact that Paul’s writings were now available. But there were things that weren’t clear. “The rest of the Scriptures”—Peter says Paul’s writings were Scriptures. Peter makes it plain.

Turn back to II Timothy 4 and see a little bit as to how some of these things came about.

II Timothy 4:6-9, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that Day, and not to me only but to all who have loved His appearing. Be diligent to come to me quickly.”

Verse 11, “Only Luke is with me. Get Mark, and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.” He was useful to him for a service. ‘I need him to do something.’

Verse 13, “Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come...and the books, especially the parchments.” Parchment was a writing material of value. It was what the scrolls were made of. It was not something on which you wrote your everyday letters, but official documents that needed to be preserved a long time. Normally, on what the Scriptures were written. Paul told Timothy, ‘Come and see me because the time of my departure is at hand. I am going to be executed. I need you to come, and bring Mark. I need him to do something and, especially, bring the parchments.’ Timothy was coming there from Ephesus, the area Paul had been and the area where there was a depository of a copy of the letters that Paul had written.

I Peter 5:13 (KJV), “The church that is at Babylon, selected together with you, salutes you; and so does Mark, my son.” Mark was to function as Peter’s assistant in the same way that Timothy was to Paul. ‘I need you to bring some

things and bring Mark. He is profitable to me for a service.’

The copy of the letters that Paul had written had been preserved in Ephesus—copies of all the things that he had written. He edited those things in the final period of his life and put them in the final form. Timothy was bringing these to Peter and Mark was coming along.

Remember the prophecy—“seal up the Law among My disciples” (Isaiah 8:16). Peter and John were the ones to whom were given the authoritative, sure word of prophecy. They were responsible for sealing up those things. He sent them, by Mark, to Peter and was responsible for putting the first twenty-two books in the New Testament. They were kept and preserved thirty or so years, and the Apostle John put the New Testament in its final form. It was preserved by the Greeks; it was preserved right where Paul spent his final years.

The emphasis on Ephesus, as the early Church, was significant in more than one way. That is where John lived his final years. That is the area where the book of Revelation was written. That is where the authoritative copies of the New Testament were kept. That is where we find them preserved as we come on down to our time today—the official Greek text, preserved in the Greek-speaking world. The other copies, that were not as completely and clearly preserved, were found elsewhere.

We find the story, a couple of centuries later, when the church at Rome and Alexandria were arguing over a canon that already existed. They were debating over whether to exclude certain books from it—Revelation, II Peter, Jude—books that showed who they were and what they were doing. Revelation 17 talks very plainly of a great city that sits on seven hills, that reigns over the kings of the earth. Rome was noted as being the city of seven hills. Some of the references were so plain that they did their best to get rid of it.

We find here that God ensured the preservation of His Word. He inspired it to be written and raised up individuals to preserve and seal it up as authoritative. And God has preserved it!

The next time we will focus in on the order in which the Jews preserved the Old Testament and the Greeks the New Testament. The order was a little different and there are reasons for that. There are things that are obscured, that you don’t properly see. Even though they couldn’t get rid of the books, they tried to confuse them. God is a God of order. The Book, on which we base our life, is God’s Book and He has put His stamp on

it. Our God has placed on this Book His seal and His stamp. You can't take anything out or put anything in because it doesn't make sense. Paul wrote fourteen books. Time after time, you see these sevens that run through. God has done these things in a systematic way. Next Bible study we will see these things more clearly.