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How to Read and Study the Bible
Lesson Five – Part 5: How We Got the New Testament
Development of the NT Canon: Fixation of the NT Canon

Lesson Five – Part 5 Topics

- Reflection Questions
- Key Terms
- Important Emphasis
- Development of the NT Canon: Fixation of the NT Canon
- Check Your Progress Questions

Reflection Questions

A. How do you resolve disputes that may occur with others—family members, co-workers, friends, etc.?

B. How should you resolve disputes that arise between yourself and another Christian in the church?

Key Terms

Arian	Constantine (Emperor)
Arian Controversy	Council of Nicea (325)
Arianism	Divinity
Arius	Humanity
Athanasius (Bishop)	Jesus Christ
Authorized Canon	Nicene Creed
Christian Church	Paschal Letter
Condemnation	Synod

Overview

The *New Bible Dictionary* breaks the development of the New Testament canon into specific periods of time. In Lesson 5, Parts 3 and 4 we studied:

The Earliest Period, AD 30-99

The Apostolic Fathers, AD 100-200

The Influence of Marcion, c.a., AD 140

Irenaeus to Eusebius

We learned that the writings of the Apostolic Fathers are significant because those men were close to the events of the life of Christ and the apostolic era (First Century AD). They addressed important issues such as the Trinity, the deity and eternality of Christ, and salvation.

This week in **Lesson 5, Part 5**, we will study the final time period dealing with the ultimate “fixation” of the New Testament Canon:

- The Fixation of the New Testament Canon, c.a., AD 367

We will examine some additional controversies, the individuals who promoted them, and the individuals and groups who successfully thwarted their efforts.

The New Testament canon was firmly fixed in the fourth century with the list of _____ in AD 367. Athanasius was the bishop of Alexandria in Northern Africa.

He was the chief defender of Christian _____ in the 4th-century battle against _____, the _____ that the Son of God was a creature of like, but not of the same, substance as God the Father. Athanasius’ important works include “*The Life of St. Antony*,” “*On the Incarnation*,” and “*Four Orations Against the Arians*.”

ORTHODOXY. Authorized or generally accepted theory, doctrine, or practice.

HERESY. A belief or opinion contrary to orthodox religious (especially Christian) doctrine (instruction, teaching).

ARIAN CONTROVERSY

This controversy was started by an Alexandrian intellectual by the name of _____. He was a gifted preacher in Alexandria. However, his false teaching about the nature of Jesus in relation to God, compromised his Christian witness and authority.

SYNODS AND COUNCILS

The dispute between Athanasius and Arius reached a bitter pitch by AD 320-321. Athanasius who was quite a determined and convincing defender of the Christian faith, called for a _____ to condemn Arius and his followers.

SYNOD. /'sinəd/ (noun) An assembly of the clergy and sometimes also the laity in a diocese (district) or other division of a particular church.

The condemnation of _____ and his followers was the beginning of many years of debate concerning the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ. This was eventually settled at the _____ in AD 325. This Council was called by _____ after efforts to resolve the issues had failed.

COUNCILS were called by church leaders to discuss and resolve critical questions related to the Christian Faith. The first Christian council was called by the Apostles (the _____) in Jerusalem to settle the question of whether or not Gentiles had to follow Jewish religious rituals in order to be saved (**Acts 15:1-29**).

The Jerusalem Council took place in A.D. 49 and resolved this important issue: it enabled Paul (and others) to keep preaching the gospel to Gentiles without Jewish encumbrances; Gentiles were not required to be _____. The decision was important in maintaining the purity of the gospel and separating law from grace.

The **Council of Nicea** settled the debate about the true nature of Jesus Christ once and for all. It was determined that He was both divine and human at the same time.

Athanasius' 39th Festal [**Paschal/Easter**] Letter, written in AD 367, is widely regarded as a milestone in the evolution (development, progression, advancement) of the canon of New Testament books. Some claim that Athanasius is the first person to identify the same 27 books of the New Testament that are in use today.

Check Your Progress Questions

1. On what date was the New Testament canon fixed?
2. Who is credited with the eventual fixing of the New Testament canon?
3. Who created the controversy surrounding the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ?
4. How were controversies concerning the Christian Faith settled in the first through the fourth centuries?
5. When was the first Council called to settle a dispute about the requirements for how one could be saved? What was the dispute?
6. What was the Council called that settled the issue (once and for all) regarding the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ? When was it called? Who called it?
7. How did Athanasius communicate to the churches under his authority the list of sacred writings that were to be used for worship and instruction, and that were later recognized as the authorized canon of the Christian church?