

## **Week of January 16 - 22**

### **How Did We Get the Books of The New Testament?**

The four Gospel accounts preserved in the Bible are authentic records left by men with firsthand knowledge of the events surrounding Jesus' life that give us a blended picture of Jesus. They tell the same circumstance, story, or event, and put each verse in chronological or context order.

The process for collecting the books of the New Testament began in the first centuries of the Christian church. Early on, some of the New Testament books were recognized as inspired. Paul considered Luke's writings to be as authoritative as the Old Testament. Peter referred to Paul's writings as Scripture. Clement of Rome mentioned eight New Testament books in AD 95. Ignatius acknowledged about seven books by AD 115. Polycarp, a student of John the Gospel writer, acknowledged fifteen books in AD 108. Later, Irenaeus mentioned twenty-one books about AD 185 and Hippolytus recognized twenty-two books (AD 170-235).

The first "canon" was compiled in AD 170 and included all the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, and 3 John. The Council of Laodicea (AD 363) concluded that only the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were to be read in the churches. The Councils of Hippo (AD 393) and Carthage (AD 397) reaffirmed the same twenty-seven books as authoritative.

The rules used by the councils to decide whether a New Testament book was truly inspired by the Holy Spirit follow. First, the author must be an apostle or have a close connection with an apostle. Second, the book must have been accepted by the body of Christ at large. Third, the book had to contain consistency of doctrine and orthodox teaching. Finally, the book had to provide high moral and spiritual values that would reflect a work of the Holy Spirit as the Author.

### **Jesus Begins to Select His Disciples (John 1:35-51)**

When Jesus returned from being tempted in the wilderness, John the Baptist pointed Him out to two of his followers, one of whom was Andrew. Andrew immediately went to find his brother Simon telling him that he had found the Messiah. The next day, Jesus met Philip, a friend of Andrew and Peter, who then found Nathaniel and told him that had met Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, and that He was the one about whom Moses had written. When Jesus saw Nathaniel and identified his as an honest man, Nathaniel recognized Jesus as the Son of God, the King of Israel.

### **The Beginning of Miracles (John 2:1-12; Luke 4:14-15)**

Three days later, Jesus, His disciples, and His mother were at a wedding in Cana when Mary realized they were running out of wine. Bringing it to Jesus' attention, she asked the caterers to do whatever he told them to do and left the matter in his hands. He told the servants to fill the six thirty-gallon pots to the brim with water and take a glass of the water to the master of ceremonies. When the host tasted it, he told the guests in a toast that the bridegroom had saved the best wine for now. Jesus' disciples believed He really was the Messiah. From there, Jesus traveled to Capernaum with His disciples, his mother, and his half-brothers.

## **His Ministry and Miracles Accelerate (Luke 4:16-30; Mark 1:21-39; Matt 4:23-25, Matt 8:14-17)**

When Jesus returned home to Nazareth, He went to the synagogue and stood up when it was His turn to read. When He opened the scroll of Isaiah, He read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the Good News to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to declare release to the captives, and to restore sight to the blind. Everyone stared at Him as He closed the book and sat down, saying, "Today this scripture is being fulfilled in your presence." They were all amazed at his claim but had reservations because they had known Him for years and still regarded Him simply as one of Joseph's sons.

So, Jesus explained to them how a prophet is never respected in his own hometown. He told how Elijah didn't reach out to all the widows in Israel when it didn't rain for three and a half years but went to a widow in Sidon. And of the many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet, the only one he healed was Naaman the Syrian.

Those in the synagogue were offended and rose to throw Him out of town. They chased him to the edge of a hill intending to push him over the cliff, but He narrowly escaped and went on His way.

Later, crowds gathered around Him on the shore of Lake Gennesaret to listen to the Word of God, so He got in one of Peter's boats where He could speak to the crowd. When He finished speaking, He told Peter to take the boat out where it was deeper and fish there. No sooner had they dropped the net than it was so full it began to split, and they asked for help from their partners in another boat. Soon both boats were sinking from the weight of the fish. Overcome with what had happened, Peter fell on his knees confessing he was a sinful man who didn't deserve to be in Jesus' presence. But Jesus responded, "From now on, I'm going to use you to catch men instead of fish. Peter, along with Zebedee's sons, James and John, docked their boats, dropped everything to follow Him.

They went to the synagogue in Capernaum, and Jesus started teaching. His presentation of the scriptures astonished his listeners because it far surpassed the mastery and authority of the scribes and other Bible scholars.

Once as He was teaching in the synagogue, a demon-possessed man shouted out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Leave us alone. I know who you are. You're the Holy Son of God. Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Hold your peace and come out of him." The demonic spirit seized the man and threw him down. With an awful scream, it was expelled and bothered the man no more. Astonished, the people wanted to know more about what was happening and if Jesus had some new doctrine which enables Him to command unclean spirits to come out of people. His fame spread like wildfire through the region of Galilee.

They left the synagogue, and Jesus went home with Peter. When they arrived, they learned that Peter's mother-in-law was very sick with a high fever. Jesus took her hand and rebuked the fever. The fever left immediately, and she got up and prepared a meal for them.

That evening as the sun set, it seemed the whole city gathered at Peter's door with all kinds of problems and diseases. Jesus cast out evil spirits with His words and healed the sick by His touch. The prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled, "He took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses upon Himself."

The next morning, He rose before dawn and went out by Himself to pray. As soon as they got up, Peter and his companions started looking for Him, and, when they found Him, they explained that everyone was looking for Him because they all wanted Him to stay in Capernaum with them. Jesus told them He was compelled to preach the Good News in other places, too. So, they went throughout the region of Galilee, and Jesus taught in the synagogues, preaching the Good News and healing all kinds of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual illnesses. His fame spread as he traveled and enormous crowds followed Him from Galilee, Syria, Decapolis, Judea, and even beyond the Jordan Valley.