

## The Origins of the New Testament Canon: Issues, Problems, and Possibilities

### #2: The Origins of Canon: Was the Idea of a New Testament a Late Ecclesiastical Development?

Introduction: Why was There a New Testament at All in Early Christianity?

#### I. The Eschatological Nature of Early Christianity

- A. Early Christians Believed God's Promised Redemption had Come in Jesus Christ
  
- B. Implications of Christ's Redemption on the Development of the Canon
  - 1. The Redemptive Activity of Jesus was viewed as the Completion of the OT Story
  - 2. The OT Pattern Indicates that New Word-Revelation Comes *After* Redemption
  - 3. The OT Predicted that the New Kingdom will Bring a New Divine Message

#### II. The Concept of Covenant in Early Christianity

- A. The Earliest Christians Viewed the Activity of Jesus Through the Lens of Covenant
  
- B. Implications of a Covenantal Orientation on the Development of the Canon
  - 1. The OT was born into the ANE world where there was a close relationship between covenants and written texts
  - 2. The OT was patterned after these extra-biblical ANE covenants—and thus also understood the close relationship between covenants and written texts
  - 3. Christians Would have understood the New Covenant as having Written Texts
  
- C. Indications that the New Testament was Covenant Document
  - 1. Inscriptional Curse (Rev 22:18-19)
  - 2. Public Reading of Books
  - 3. 2 Cor 3:6, "ministers of a new covenant"
  - 4. Church Fathers' use of "covenant" for NT documents

### III. The Role of the Apostles in Early Christianity

#### A. The Written Word of the Apostles Was as Authoritative as Their Spoken Word

#### B. Factors that Led Apostles to Put Message in Written Form

1. The Covenantal Heritage of Judaism
2. The Practical Needs of the Apostolic Mission
3. Would the Expectation of Christ's Imminent Return Keep Christians from Writing things Down?