

We know there are more books of the bible written about Jesus' life. Who selected which books went in to the bible and which ones to leave out?

2 Timothy 3:16 tells us "*All scripture is God breathed....*" meaning every word is inspired by God, written by earthly author's but God's Word spoken through them.

The Old Testament was basically ordered and put together just before Jesus came. So there's no problem with the books of the Old Testament because the ones that weren't recognized as God breathed were left out. The Hebrew bible though has a different order to their books.

The New Testament books were put together around the second-third century in some rough order but there was much discussion as to which books should be added and which ones should be left out.

On the 19th June 325AD, the council of Nicaea was formed which was the first ecumenical worldwide council of the churches. (Holy Catholic Church). About 300 bishops plus various deacons and elders would've amounted to maybe over 1000 people gathered to hold discussions on theological viewpoints.

Eusebius of Caesarea also came to the meeting producing a creed he came up with for his own church and together the council worked on it to produce the Nicene Creed. They also decided on the date of Easter. All up, it's said this council met together as a whole for 3 years to decide all these things. Other councils followed in the 4th century (Council of Chalcedon) who simply backed up and verified the canon (Books of the Bible) and dealt with other such heresies and theological splits.

The Catholic Church has the Apocrypha added to their bible yet Jesus or the apostles don't mention these writings at all. They are more historical books rather than theological.

An example of a book not included in the bible is the 'Gospel of Thomas' which starts off by saying they're the secret sayings of Jesus. Not all of the things in this book add up and also, why would Jesus have secret sayings? He was a very public person & he wanted the gospel to be very public. It contains a very different tone and structure to the other gospels. It doesn't refer to Jesus as Christ or Lord but just Jesus. Lacks miracles, death & resurrection and other links our gospel has with each other.

An example of what it says. The last verse of Thomas' gospel says in Chapter 114, "Simon Peter said to them, "Make Mary leave us, for females don't deserve life." Jesus said, "Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the domain of Heaven." Work it out for yourself.

In Jesus' time, magic and supernatural were accepted as normal everyday events. Even casting out demons & evil spirits. What made Jesus' work different?

The Apostles had power to heal, raise people from the dead and some other things. All other people were able to do was to drive out demons. Non-apostles could drive out demons but they can't raise people from the dead. They can't turn water into wine, they can't make the cripple walk, they can't raise people from the dead.

Acts 19 tells of the seven sons of Sceva and when they confronted a demon possessed man, he said to them, "Jesus I know, Paul I know but you I don't." You see, even demons shudder at Jesus and know his power.

Magicians these days on TV can do many marvelous things but they can't do the things Jesus did. They're just illusionists and they give no glory to God.

The Son of God forgave sins, died and rose in 3 days – this is what he foretold. These are totally egotistical things to say about yourself if you weren't the son of God. But Jesus talked the talk didn't he? Walking on water, raising the dead, healing from a distance. Basically Jesus came and turned the world upside down.

If God was totally in control of the crucifixion, why did Jesus have to suffer so much?

Three times in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus tells his disciples in detail that he is going to Jerusalem to be killed and to rise from the dead. Let's read all three.

Mark 8:31: *"And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again."*

Mark 9:31: *"He was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.'"*

Mark 10:33-34: *"See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."*

This question could refer to Jesus suffering as in death or suffering as in the way he was treated in death.

But the main thing we have to realise is that Jesus had to die.

Hebrews 10:11-14. *"Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."*

The way Jesus was treated in death just shows how depraved we are in our human sinful ways. The Romans were especially good at making people suffer in torment, agony, and having long and drawn out ways of dying. People in this world love that kind of stuff.

Imagine what people would say about Christianity if Jesus died an easy death? Would we feel our sin would be rightly atoned for our sin? Could we say that we who suffer cancer could say, well Jesus never suffered as much as I have so how would he know? God didn't choose plan B.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came in the flesh to suffer and die and by that suffering and death to save undeserving sinners like you and me. I feel the reason Jesus suffered so much was to firstly show the enormity of sin he was dying for. Also I reckon he suffered so much so he could relate to each of us in our own suffering and so we can overcome our suffering because Jesus has. The suffering of the utterly innocent and infinitely holy Son of God in the place of utterly undeserving sinners to bring us to everlasting joy is the greatest display of the glory of God's grace that ever was, or ever could be.

We could also ask why Christians suffer? Basically because Christ suffered! It's a mark of a true Christian. Therefore it doesn't mean that our suffering is random or without purpose. The apostle Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 4:8-9** "*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed*"

We're called to suffer together as his church. "*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*" **Galatians 6:2**

We're in a spiritual battle here this morning. The devil has tried every trick to not make us come to church this morning. He's trying to pull us over to the dark side. That's why we're suffering.

Romans 8:17-18 "*Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*"

What it comes down to in this spiritual battle here on earth is that we know Jesus Is better.

John Piper says it this way:

"Suffering is nothing more than the taking away of bad things or good things that the world offers for our enjoyment — reputation, esteem among peers, job, money, spouse, sexual life, children, friends, health, strength, sight, hearing, success, etc. When these things are taken away (by force or by circumstance or by choice), we suffer. But if we have followed Paul and the teaching of Jesus and have already counted them as loss for the surpassing value of gaining Christ, then we are prepared to suffer."

Predestination or free will? How much of our lives are pre-ordained?

Romans 8:29-30. *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

Predestination does not refer here to the choice of who will be saved. It refers to the appointed destiny for those who are chosen. First, God chooses, that is, he unconditionally sets his favor on whom he will, then, he destines them for their glorious role in eternity. The aim of predestination relates to our own good in that we're appointed to share the very glory of the risen Christ both morally in blameless righteousness and physically in a resurrection body of glory like his.

Not all people are chosen to be saved but all are chosen for god's purposes. His predestining and his purposing are the same. God chose his people with a view to saving them by the work

of the Spirit and by faith. Predestination is not based on anything inside of us: not on our worth as a person (since then everyone would qualify) nor on our faith (which is a gift of God). Our election is unconditional. Our predestination is unconditional. And our effectual calling is unconditional. Whom he foreknew he also predestined and whom he predestined he also called.

Ephesians 1:3-6 *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.”*

Do you believe God's great desire for those who believe in him is that you feel secure in his love? It's like he's saying to us, "I've chosen you before the foundation of the world. I've predestined you to be my children forever. I've redeemed you by the blood of my Son. And I've put my Spirit in you as a seal and a guarantee. Therefore, come and receive the inheritance and praise the glory of my grace forever and ever. This is what Ephesians 1 is all about - feeling secure in God's love and power. God doesn't promise us an easy life. In fact, through many tribulations you must enter the kingdom. God doesn't always promise to speak in soft tones of approval, but to warn you in love whenever you begin to seek security in anything but him.

You, my friend, have been chosen by God. You have been predestined; you have been redeemed; you have been sealed with God's Spirit. Your inheritance is sure, because God's passionately committed to magnifying the glory of his grace thru your salvation.

If you're trusting in Jesus Christ this evening, the roots of your life were planted in the eternal counsels of God even before you were born, and the branches of your life are growing into an absolutely sure and glorious future with God. You have to remember, there are no unimportant days in your life. You don't ever have to go to bed at night feeling that your life is going nowhere. You don't ever have to give in to the lie that you're no one. God has a purpose for you and he's carrying out that purpose without you fully realizing it. And for what reason - for his glory and his praise. That's why we're all here this morning.

Amen