

The Canon

The Apostle John closed the Canon. To put it simply, the Apostle John recognized and announced the close of the Canon of Scripture in the mid-A.D. 90s. He said, *I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book* (Revelation 22:18-19).

Why does this recognize and close the New Testament Canon? Some ask, "Isn't this command given elsewhere in Scripture?" and "Isn't John just referring to additions to the future predictions in the book of Revelation?"

Answer: No. This command was never given before. The contexts of previous commands (as in Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; and Proverbs 30:6) are against false teaching, adding a different theology or ignoring God's directives. The Revelation 22:18-19 passage is about adding new inspired Scripture. And yes, John is referring to the book of Revelation. Specifically, he is saying there should never be any Scriptural additions to the book of Revelation. But no, he is not just referring to future predictions. The word for *prophecy*, here in Revelation 22, is *propheteia*, the word for the inspired special revelation of God. This is not just about future predictions. The word John used here is elsewhere used to describe Old Testament Scripture in general (2 Peter 1:20-21), the prophecy of Isaiah (Matthew 13:14), and the New Testament church gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 13:2). This is about the revelation of the book of Revelation, not just the future predictions made in the book of Revelation.

Although similar words are often used interchangeably, the word emphasizing future predictions is *apokalupsis*. The title of Revelation is *Apokalupsis Iesou Christou*, "The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ." The book focuses on the apocalyptic events preceding and following the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. But what John said no one should add to or take from is the general word *propheteia* for revelation written down by men via the inspiration of God. John is saying no one should attempt to add Scripture to this Scripture. Since the next verse talks about the Second Coming of Christ, we can assume there might be new Scripture revealed at or after the Second Coming, but not before.

How does this eliminate the addition of other books? Suppose I line up a row of something, say, coffee cups. Then, as I add a cup to the row, I say, "No one should add any more cups to this cup which I am setting down." That would mean the cup I just put down is to be the last cup in the row, and no one should add to the row of cups. Any cup added to the last cup would add to the row of cups. So the row of cups is closed. The cups already put down are all in the row, but no new ones can be added to the row, without violating my prohibition.

In this little illustration, the cups represent the books of the New Testament. We cannot say that John was making a case for all 27 books being in the New Testament, but we can say that John was declaring that no other books should be added to the one he had just written. There may be other more or less good Christian books to read, such as the letters of the Apostolic Fathers. But John prohibits adding anything considered to be Scripture *propheteia*. Whichever divinely inspired books might have preceded this one, the book of Revelation is the close of the New Testament Canon. The Canon was closed, not theologically but chronologically. Nothing added after the writing of Revelation in the mid- 90s was to be considered Scripture.

For more information on the Canon see: Long Papers- Canonicity at: <https://relationalconcepts.org/>