

Madison Heights Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
149 Main Street
Madison Heights, VA 24572

MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

No. 5

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George B. Harris, Minister
Email: bernerdharris@yahoo.com
mhcc16@yahoo.com
Church Telephone: (434) 845-3855
Minister's Telephone: (434) 215-4846

Pam Hubbard
Music Director

Brenda Harris
Administrative Assistant

One Gospel

After becoming a Christian I began searching for information about Jesus. It seemed logical to me that someone as important as Jesus would have more books written about him than the four that we have in the Bible. I went to all of the Christian bookstores in town and asked if there were any books or documents that were written about Jesus that were not put into the Bible? At one particular store I was snubbed and told "We don't have that stuff here!" I thought "I'm looking for Jesus it seems to me that you would be looking also and should be willing to help others conduct research." Some Christians are ruled by embedded ideology and as a consequence reject theological study. I did eventually find what I was looking for in a secular bookstore. I wondered, "Why wouldn't these documents be included in the Bible?" The answer is called canonization. There were some fictional accounts that were written for various reasons. So, the documents had to be analyzed to establish credibility. Only the documents with credibility were put into the Bible.

Some of the people that walked with Christ and witnessed him first hand told inspired accounts of their experiences. These oral traditions were passed along and some were written on scrolls. Eventually some of these documents were regarded highly because they formed a doctrinal link to the Apostles. To the Apostle Paul there was just one gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not Paul's gospel, it is not man's gospel, it is God's gospel.

When Christianity was a new movement the New Testament books were not yet seen as books that were on equal footing with Old Testament. It was during the 4th century that concentrated attempts were made, in both the East and the West, to establish an authoritative collection of the scriptures. In 365, Athanasius of Alexandria listed the 27 books of the New Testament as the only source of salvation and of the authentic teaching of the religion of the Gospel. In 382 Bishop Damascus had Jerome work on a Latin text to standardize the Scripture. The resulting Vulgate was used throughout the Christian world. The Synods of Carthage in 397 and 418 both confirmed our current 27 books of the New Testament. The movement in the East and the movement in the West turned out the same results. The criteria used for determining the books included the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, Apostolic origin, amount of usage by the Church, intrinsic content, spiritual and moral effect, and the attitude of the early church. After the Reformation, the books of the Canon were widely agreed upon.

In the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation rejected the role of Roman Catholic Church to supersede the authority of Scripture. We know that the Scriptures are inspired, and that the Gospel message is true. One undeniable fact about the books of the Bible is that they stand the test of time; they stay current no matter the era. The Holy Bible contains the greatest literature on the face of this earth. The contents of the Bible are much greater than anything any great author has ever written. The Bible is more than a book of science. The Bible is more than a book of history. The Bible is a book of faith.

George