

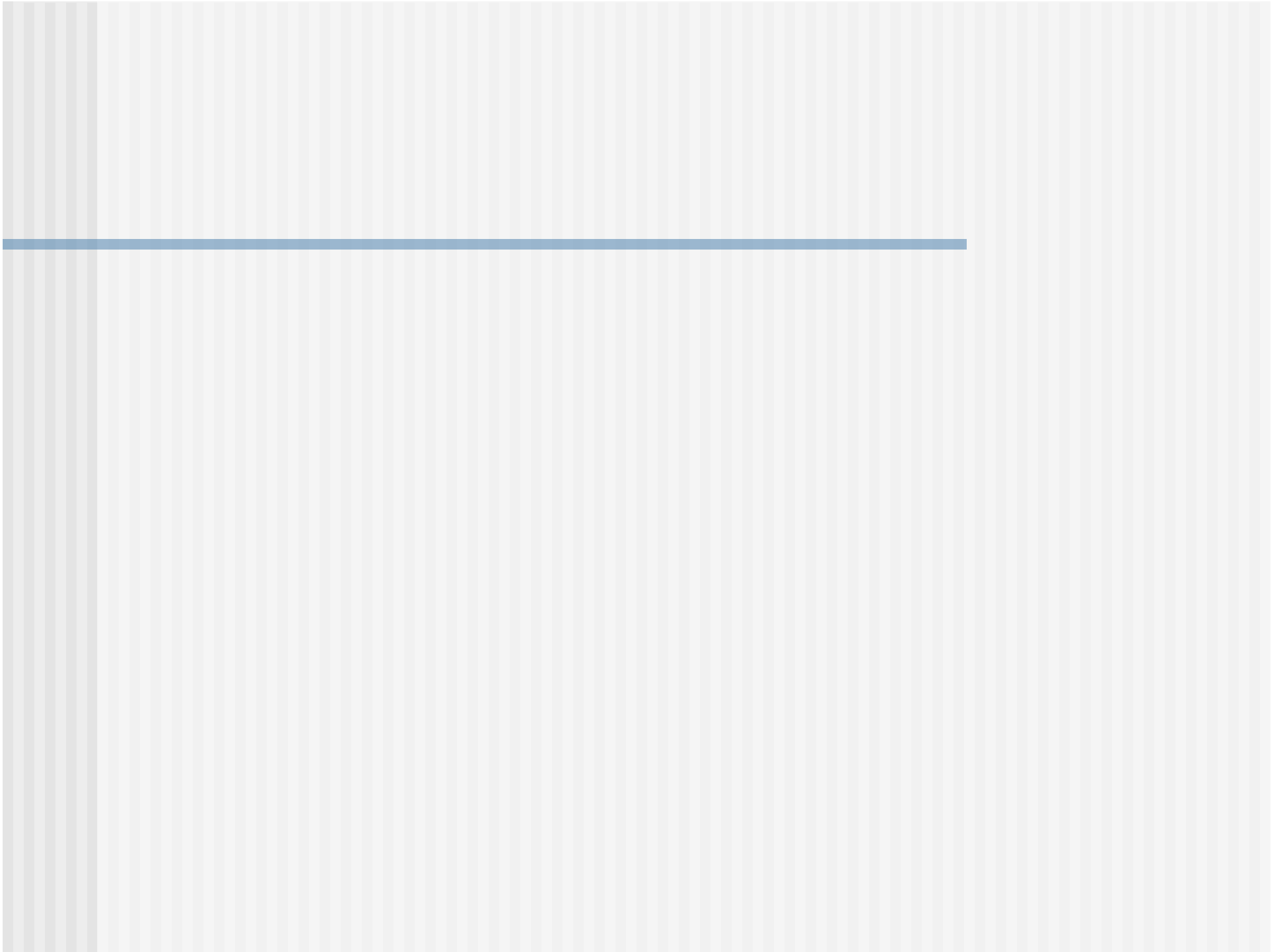
Canonization

The Recognition of the Biblical Writings

What is the Canon of Scripture?

What is the 'Canon' of Scripture?

- The canon of Scripture is the list of books that have been recognized as being inspired by God and which therefore belong in the Bible.



Why is the Canon Important?

■² Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.

■ Deuteronomy 4:2

Why is the Canon Important?

■⁵ Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. ⁶ Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.

■ Proverbs 30:5-6

Key Questions

- Which books belong in the Old Testament?
- Which books belong in the New Testament?
- Who decided these questions?
- What criteria were used?

The Old Testament Canon

The Writings of Moses

God's Written & Binding Covenant

- ⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey."

■ Exodus 24:7

The Ten Commandments

■⁴ The LORD wrote on these tablets what he had written before, the Ten Commandments he had proclaimed to you on the mountain, out of the fire, on the day of the assembly. And the LORD gave them to me. ⁵
Then I came back down the mountain and put the tablets in the ark I had made, as the LORD commanded me, and they are there now.

■ Deuteronomy 10:4-5

The Torah – God’s Law

- ²⁴ After Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law from beginning to end, ²⁵ he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD: ²⁶ "Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God. There it will remain as a witness against you."



The Prophets and the Writings

Joshua's Writings

■²⁵ On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he drew up for them decrees and laws. ²⁶
And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD.

Prophetic Writings

■¹ This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ² "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you.'"

■ Jeremiah 30:1-2

Prophetic Writings

■² Then the LORD replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. ³ For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay."

The Writings

- ¹ These are the last words of David: "The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel's singer of songs: ² 'The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.'"

The Writings

- ¹ My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, ² turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, ³ and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, ⁴ and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, ⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. ⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

■ Proverbs 2:1-6

The Threefold Old Testament Canon

- The Law,
- the Prophets,
and the Writings

Old Testament – Law, Prophets, and Writings

■⁴⁴ He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

■ Luke 24:44

Old Testament – Law, Prophets, and Writings

- Whereas many and great things have been delivered unto us by the law and the prophets, and by others that have followed their steps, for the which things Israel ought to be commended for learning and wisdom...

Old Testament – Law, Prophets, and Writings

■ My grandfather Jesus, when he had much given himself to the reading of the law, and the prophets, and other books of our fathers, and had gotten therein good judgment, was drawn on also himself to write something pertaining to learning and wisdom....

Old Testament – Law, Prophets, and Writings

■ ... and not only these things, but **the law itself**, and **the prophets**, and **the rest of the books**, have no small difference, when they are spoken in their own language.

■ *Prologue to Ecclesiasticus*

■ 2nd Century BC

Old Testament – Law, Prophets, and Writings

■ For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses...

Old Testament – Law, Prophets, and Writings

- ... but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.

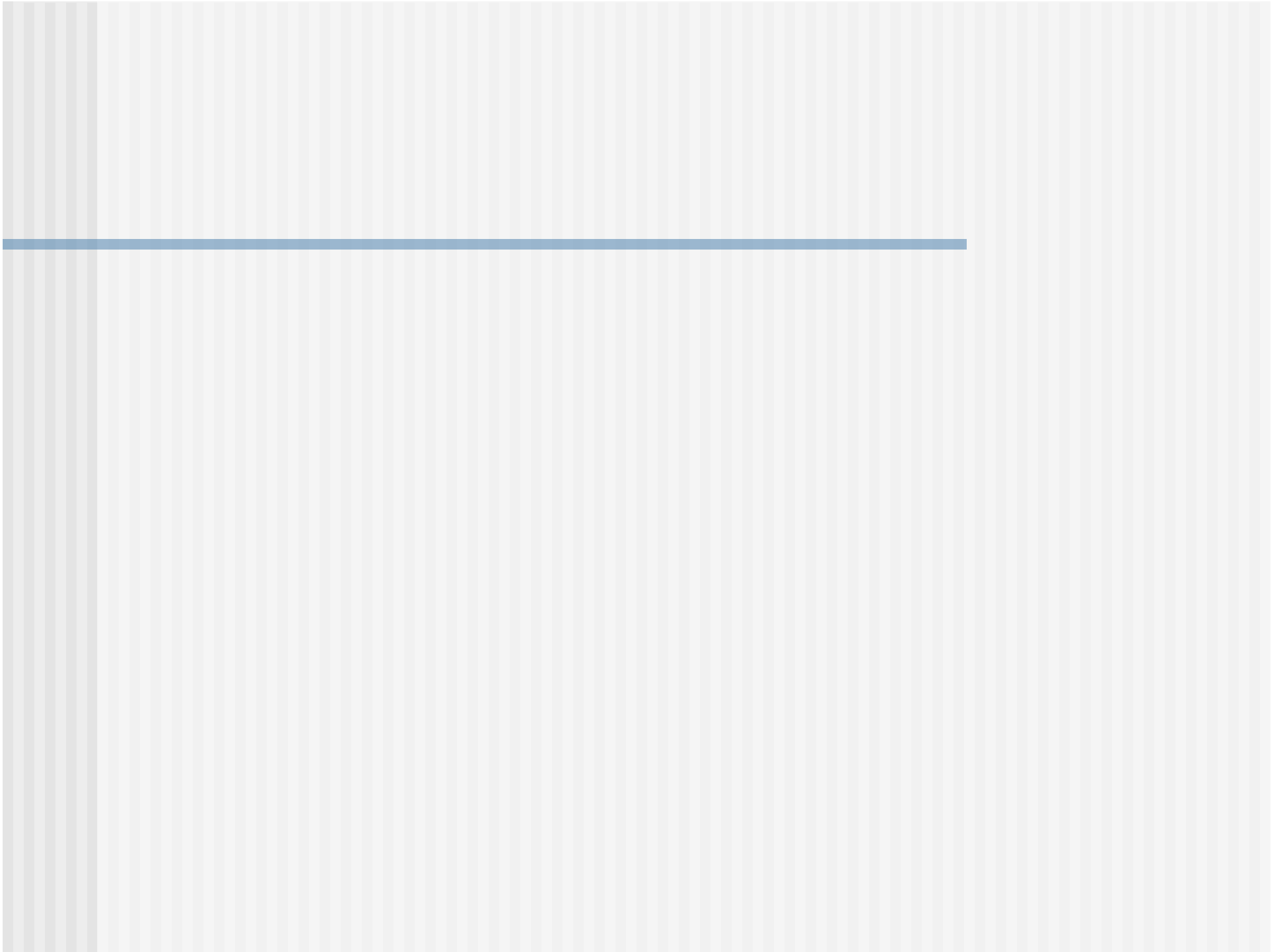
- Josephus
- *Against Apion* 1:8

The Jewish Canon

- **The Law** - Genesis – Deuteronomy
- **The Prophets**
 - Former – Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings
 - Latter – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve
- **The Writings** – Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles

OT Books Whose Canonicity Was Questioned

- Esther – no mention of God
- Song of Songs – erotic love poem?
- Ecclesiastes – orthodox?
- Proverbs – contradictions?
- Ezekiel – Temple specifications different than in Torah?



The New Testament Canon

The Apostolic Teaching Is the Word of God

- ¹³ And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, **you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.**

The Apostolic Teaching Is the Word of God

- ² For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

■ 1 Thessalonians 4:2

The Apostolic Teaching Is the Word of God

- ¹ Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. ² I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

■ 2 Peter 3:1-2

The Apostolic Writing Is the Word of God

- ³⁷ If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command.

■ 1 Corinthians 14:37

The Apostolic Writing Is the Word of God

- ¹⁵ Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

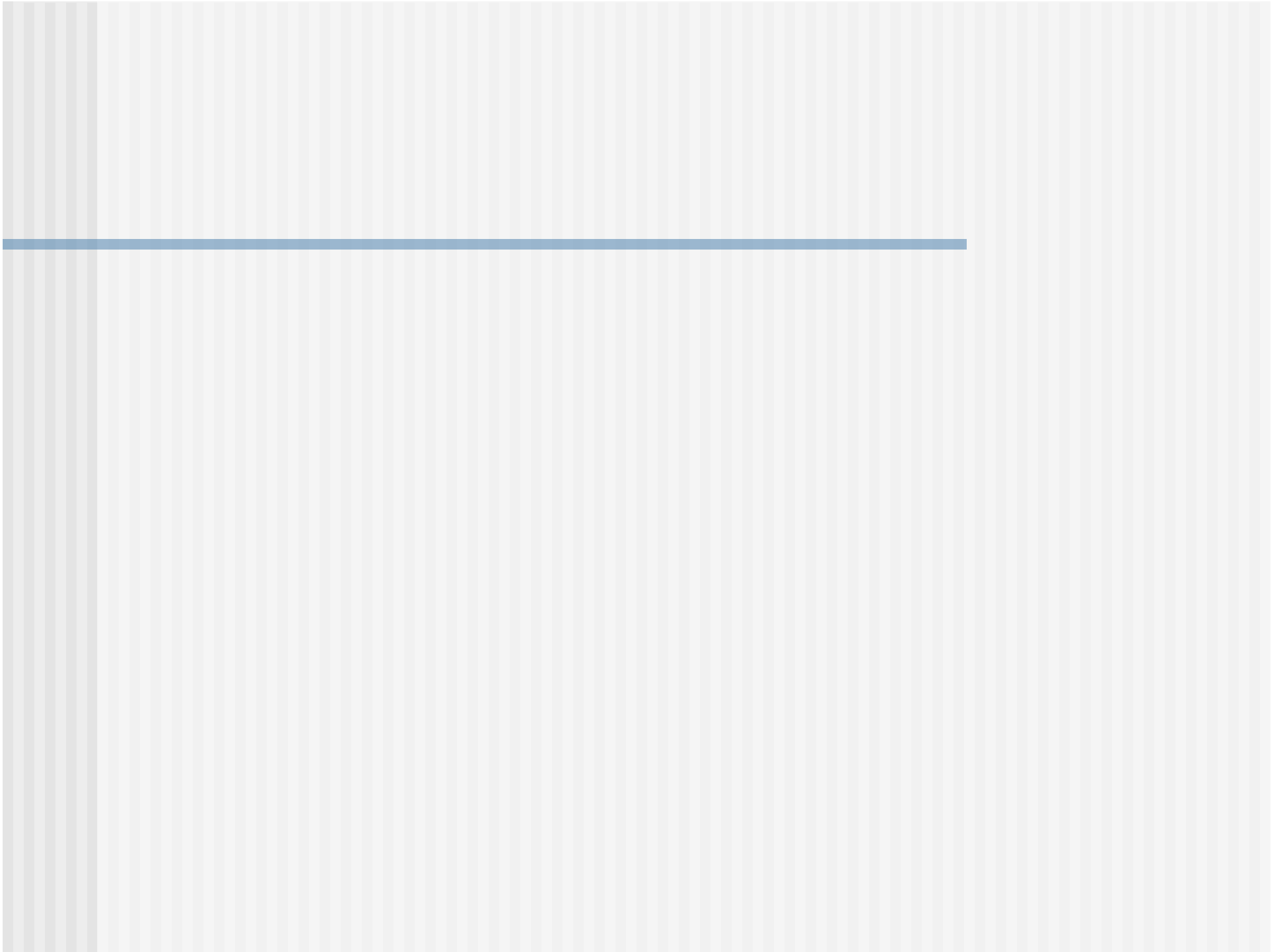
■ 2 Peter 3:15-16

The Apostolic Writing Is the Word of God

- ¹⁷ The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.
¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."

■ 1 Timothy 5:17-18

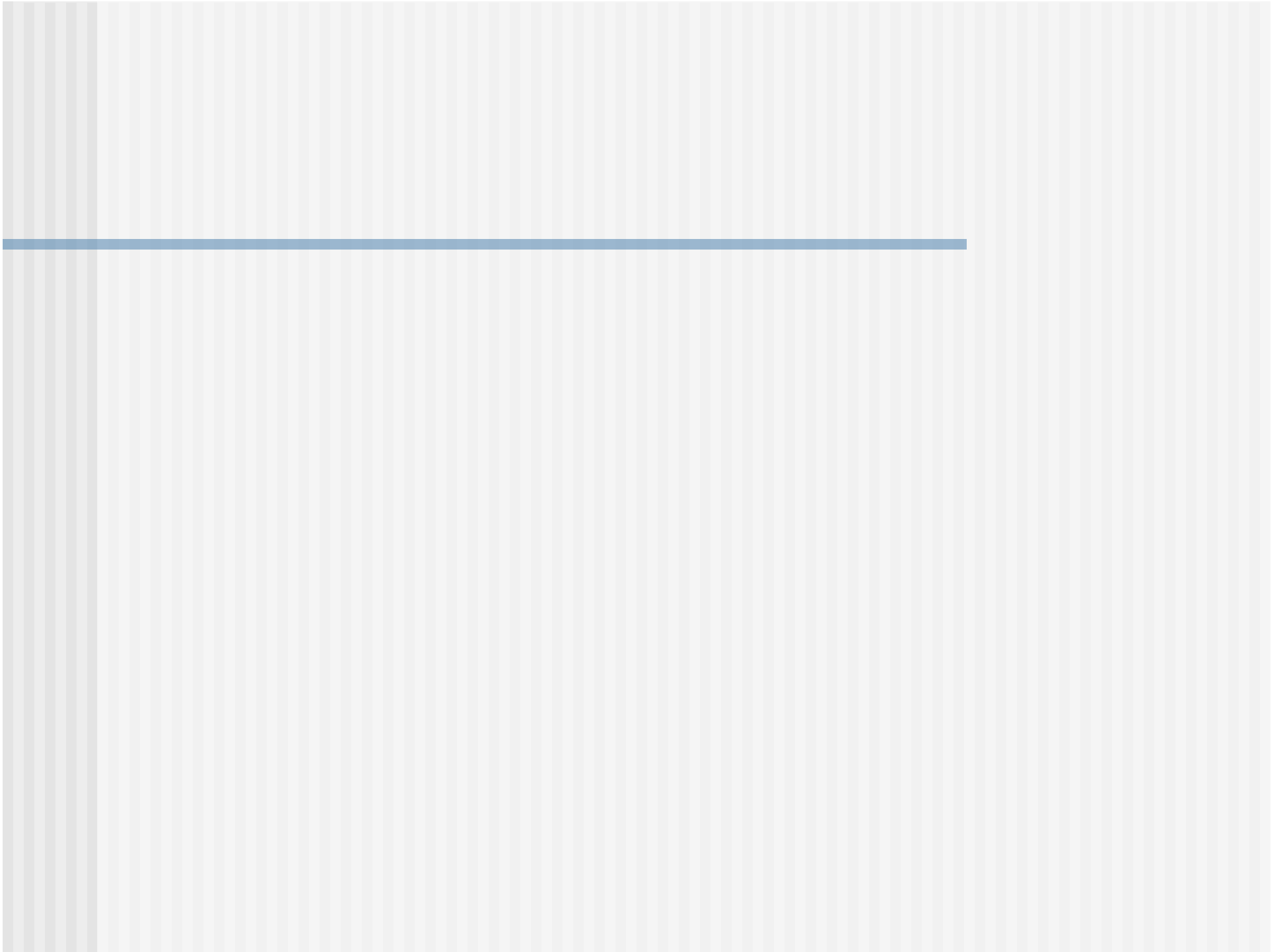
■ Quoting Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7



The Early Church Read Apostles Writings

- And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.

■ Justin Martyr
■ *First Apology*, 67.3



The Rise of the Heretics: The Need for A New Testament Canon

Heretics Who Demonstrated the Need For A Fixed Canon

- Marcion
- Valentinus and the Gnostics

Marcion – A Truncated Canon

- No Old Testament
- A highly edited Gospel of Luke
- Highly edited versions of 10 of Paul's letters (he did not include the Pastoral Epistles)

Valentinus and the Gnostics – An Expanded and Reinterpreted Canon

- Accepted most of the NT books
- Reinterpreted the NT writings to line up with Gnostic dualistic thought
- The Gnostics added their own Gnostic writings

The Growth of A New Testament Canon

Some Early Important Lists of NT Books

- The Muratorian Fragment (2nd century)
- Eusebius (c. 300 AD)
 - Recognized
 - Disputed
 - Generally accepted
 - Not genuine
 - Rejected

Some Important Trends in the Development of An NT Canon

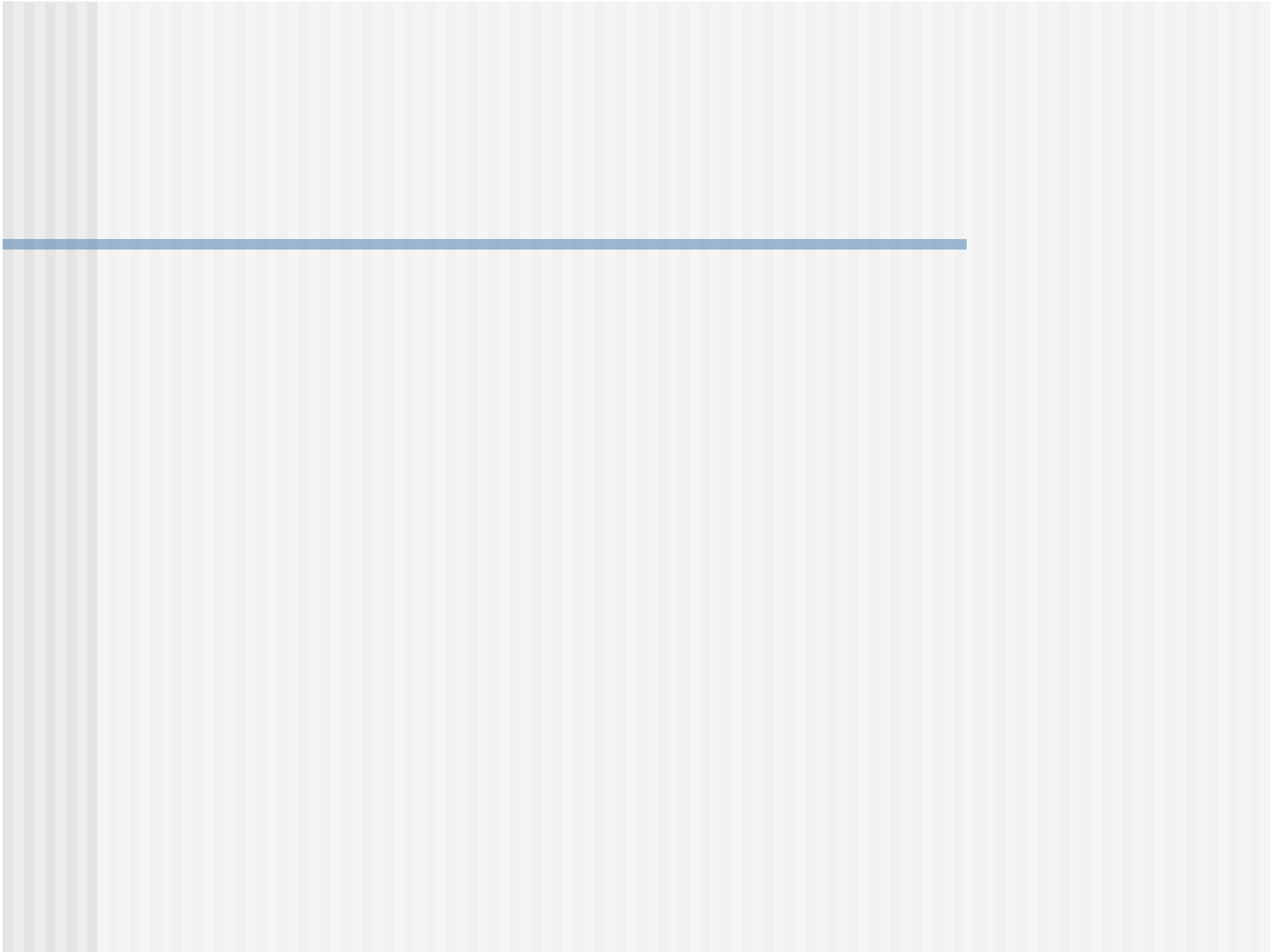
- Gospels, Acts and Paul accepted quickly
- 1 Peter and 1 John accepted quickly
- General epistles accepted slowly
- Differences between the East and West

Athanasius' Paschal Letter of 367

- First list to contain NT exactly as we have it – no more, no less
- By this point the NT canon was settled and was never really in serious dispute afterwards

Luther and the NT Canon

- Luther strongly questioned the canonicity of Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation
- He eventually accepted all of these books as canonical
- Protestants, Roman Catholics, and the Eastern Orthodox all have the same NT



Criteria for NT Canonicity

- Apostolicity
- Orthodoxy
- Universality

What About the Apocrypha?

What are the Apocrypha?

- Also known as Deuterocanonical books
- Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox include them as part of their OT
- Include books such as Judith, Tobit, Maccabees, etc.

Where Did the Apocrypha Come From?

- Greek speaking Jews translated the OT into Greek – the Septuagint (LXX)
- Added to the OT canonical books in the LXX
- Some were probably originally written in Greek

How Did Jews View the Apocrypha?

NOT ACCEPTED AS SCRIPTURE BY MOST Jews

- It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time...

■ Josephus
■ *Against Apion*, 1:8

NOT ACCEPTED AS SCRIPTURE BY MOST Jews

- After the latter prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi had died, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel, but they still availed themselves of the bath qol...

- Babylonian Talmud, Yomah 9b

- Quoted in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 56

The Apocrypha in the Church

The Apocrypha Was Widely Used

- The wide use and influence of the LXX
- Animosity between Christians and Jews

Early Fathers Who Denied Apocrypha Was Scripture

- Melito of Sardis
- Origen
- Athanasius

Early Fathers Who Rejected Apocrypha

■ There are other books outside of these which are indeed not included in the canon, but have been appointed from the time of the fathers to be read to those who are recent converts to our company and wish to be instructed in the word of true religion. These are the Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Sirach, Esther, Judith and Tobit....

■ Athanasius
■ *Paschal Letter*, 367 AD

Early Fathers Who Denied Apocrypha Was Scripture

- Melito of Sardis
- Origen
- Athanasius
- Jerome

Early Fathers Who Rejected Apocrypha

■ Whatever falls outside these must be set apart among the Apocrypha. Therefore Wisdom, which is commonly entitled Solomon's, with the book of Jesus the son of Sirach, Judith, Tobias and the Shepherd are not in the canon...

■ Jerome

■ Quoted in Bruce, *Canon of Scripture*, 90

Apocrypha – Edification - Not Doctrine

■ Therefore as the church indeed reads Judith, Tobit and the books of Maccabees, but does not receive them among the canonical books, so let it also read these two volumes for the edification of the people but not for establishing the authority of ecclesiastical dogmas.

■ Jerome

■ Quoted in Bruce, *Canon of Scripture*, 91-92

Early Fathers Who Treated Apocrypha As Scripture

- Tertullian
- Augustine
- Many early churches used Apocryphal books (and other non-canonical books from the NT era as well) regularly in meetings
- Most early translations included Apocrypha

The Apocrypha – From the Reformation to the Present

The Apocrypha During the Time of the Reformation

- Reformers – Edification, but not doctrine
- Roman Catholic Church - Council of Trent accepted them as part of the Canon
- Eastern Orthodox Church - Councils of Jassy (1642) and Jerusalem (1672) accepted them as part of the canon

The Apocrypha Today

- Protestants – virtually ignored except for scholars
- Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox – accepted as Scripture, but usually relegated to a lower class

The Apocrypha Today

- In the west these books are often called the 'Apocrypha'. These were declared by the Councils of Jassy (1642) and Jerusalem (1672) to be 'genuine parts of Scripture;' most Orthodox scholars at the present day, however, following the opinion of Athanasius and Jerome, consider that the Deutero-Canonical Books, although part of the Bible, stand on a lower footing than the rest of the Old Testament.

- Bishop Kallistos Ware
- *The Orthodox Church*

Jesus on the Limits of the OT Canon?

- There is evidence that Chronicles was the last book in the Hebrew Bible as Jesus knew it. When he said that the generation he addressed would be answerable for ‘the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world’, he added, ‘from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary’ (Luke 11:50f.).

Jesus on the Limits of the OT Canon?

- Abel is the first martyr in the Bible (Gen. 4:8); Zechariah is most probably the son of Jehoiada, who was stoned to death 'in the court of Yahweh's house' because, speaking by the Spirit of God he rebuked the king and people of Judah for transgressing the divine commandments (2 Chron. 24:20-22).

Jesus on the Limits of the OT Canon?

- Zechariah (c 800 BC) was not *chronologically* the last faithful prophet to die as a martyr; some two centuries later a prophet named Uriah was put to death in Jerusalem because his witness was unacceptable to King Jehoiakim (Jer. 26:20-23). But Zechariah is *canonically* the last faithful prophet to die as a martyr, because his death is recorded in Chronicles, the last book in the Hebrew Bible.

■ FF Bruce

■ *Canon of Scripture*, 31

The Canon – Concluding Thoughts

The Right Canon Was Established

- The New Testament books became canonical because no one could stop them from doing so.

■ William Barclay

- Quoted in Bruce, *Canon of Scripture*, 282

The Right Canon Was Established

- The books which were included to form the future canon *forced themselves on the Church by their intrinsic apostolic authority*, as they do still, because *Kyrios* Christ speaks in them.

■ Oscar Cullman

■ Quoted in Bruce, *Canon of Scripture*, 282

