GOD'S WORD IS LIFE

READING THE BIBLE AS LAW AND GOSPEL:

THE WORD THAT READS US

HISTORICAL TIMELINE: HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE

c. 1200–500 BC

ORAL TRADITIONS AND EARLY WRITINGS

Israel's stories, laws, songs, and prophetic words are spoken, written, collected, and preserved.

c. 500 BC–AD 100

THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES TAKE SHAPE

The Torah, Prophets, and Writings gain recognition as sacred Scripture. The boundaries of the collection develop gradually.

c. 300 BC–AD 100

THE SEPTUAGINT AND APOCRYPHA

Jewish Scriptures are translated into Greek. Additional Jewish writings, including books later called the Apocrypha, circulate and are preserved. Their authority is understood differently in Jewish and Christian communities.

c. AD 30–100

JESUS AND THE APOSTOLIC AGE

Jesus teaches from Israel's Scriptures. Christ is proclaimed before a New Testament exists. Paul's letters, the Gospels, and other apostolic writings emerge.

c. AD 100–200

THE CHRISTIAN WRITINGS CIRCULATE

Churches copy, exchange, and read apostolic writings in worship. The four Gospels and Paul's letters become widely recognized.

c. AD 200–350

THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON TAKES SHAPE

Churches increasingly distinguish authoritative apostolic writings from other Christian literature. Some books remain disputed.

AD 367

ATHANASIUS' FESTAL LETTER

The earliest surviving list naming exactly the 27 books of our present New Testament.

AD 393–419

THE COUNCILS OF HIPPO AND CARTHAGE

Regional councils affirm the 27 New Testament books and an Old Testament collection including books now called Deuterocanonical. Their decisions reflect developing church consensus.

AD 1534

LUTHER'S GERMAN BIBLE

Luther places the Apocrypha in a separate section, regarding these books as useful for reading but not equal to Holy Scripture.

AD 1546

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

The Roman Catholic Church formally affirms the Deuterocanonical Books. Protestant and Catholic Old Testament canons remain different, as do some Eastern Orthodox collections.

Eastern Orthodox churches generally recognize a broader Old Testament canon than Protestants, including books such as 1 Esdras, 3 Maccabees, and Psalm 151. The precise collection varies among Orthodox traditions, reflecting the continuing influence of the Greek Septuagint.