

An aerial photograph of a dense evergreen forest covered in a thick layer of snow. A two-lane asphalt road with white dashed lines curves through the center of the image, separating the forest into two roughly equal halves. The trees are dark green and heavily laden with white snow, creating a high-contrast, textured appearance. The overall scene is serene and quiet, with a soft, diffused light.

The Unity of the Bible

Understanding the arch of Scripture from beginning to end

objectives

- ❖ to understand why the canon was reopened
- ❖ to clarify what qualifies to be included in canon
- ❖ to learn how the NT docs were understood as Scripture
- ❖ to see the role of Holy Spirit in writing process
- ❖ to gain an overview of the timeline of NT canon acceptance & its closure



THE TESTAMENT CANON

How did the early church decide which letters to include in the NT canon?

Old Testament Canon

- Bible = God's word
- recording of God's redemptive acts in history
- OT = God's word & his interpretation of his redemptive actions among Israel



New Testament Canon

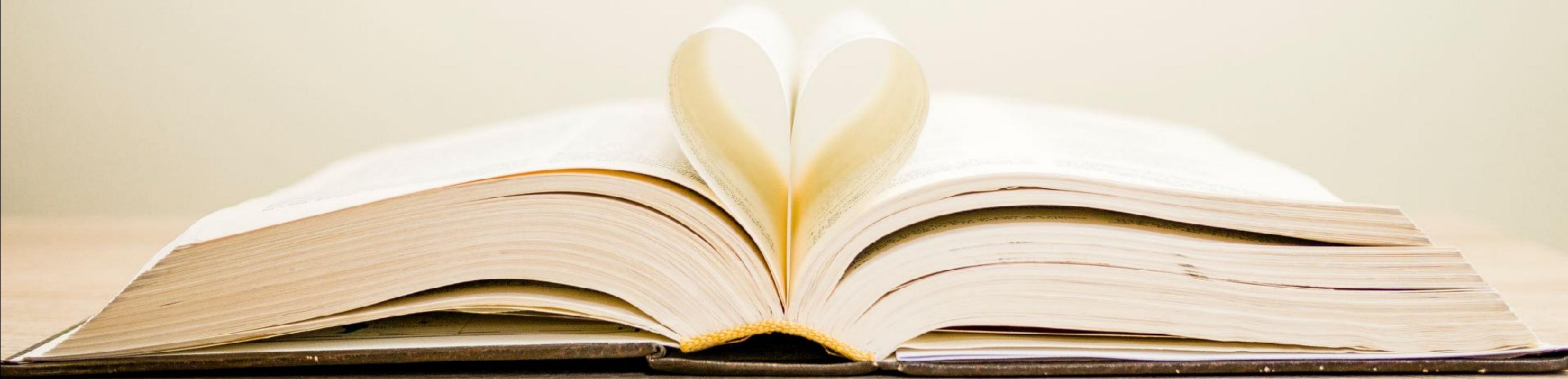
- John the Baptist - God's authoritative spokesman
- Jesus of Nazareth - not a mere prophet (i.e. spokesman), but Son = with God the Father



And Jesus came and said to them, “**All authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the **Son** and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all that **I have commanded you**. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)

If God is speaking through Jesus,
then the canon is reopened.





Jesus' teaching is
found in the writings
of the apostles and
in those authorized
by the apostles.

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

John 14:26 (ESV)

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”

John 16:13 (ESV)

And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

1 Corinthians 2:13 (ESV)

God's Holy Spirit helped the apostles
write Scripture



And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, **the word of God**, which is at work in you believers.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)

... you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,

2 Peter 3:2 (ESV)

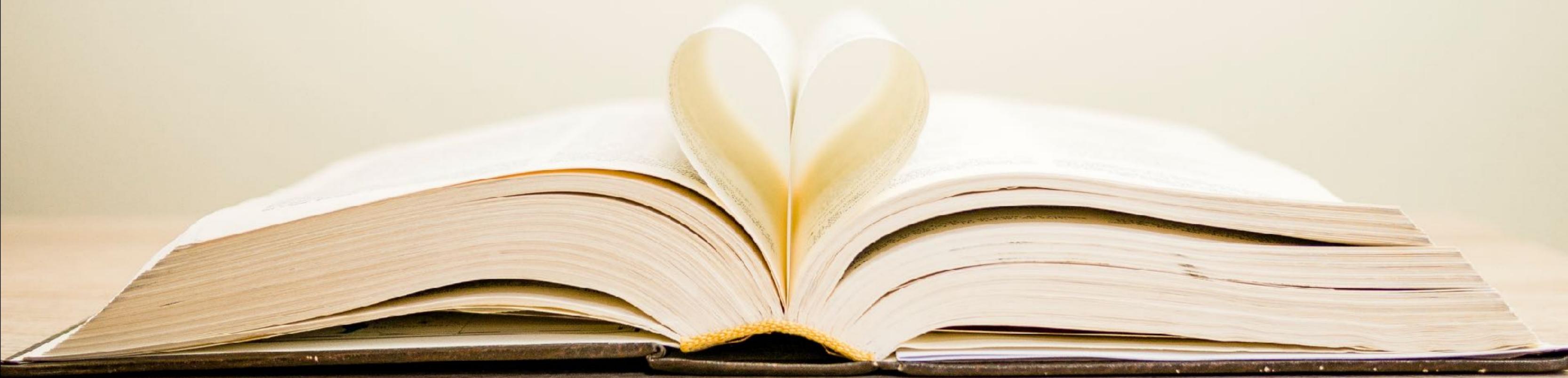
“I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.”

1 Thessalonians 5:27 (ESV)

“And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.”

Colossians 4:16 (ESV)

only God's Holy Spirit is
authoritative



“If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.”

1 Corinthians 14:37-38 (ESV)

“We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

1 John 4:6 (ESV)

“The apostles, then, have authority to write words that are God’s own words, equal in truth status and authority to the words of the Old Testament Scriptures. They do this to record, interpret, and apply to the lives of believers the great truths about the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.”

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 61



New Testament documents were thus understood to be as authoritative as Old Testament documents

“...as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in **all his letters** when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do **the other Scriptures.**”

2 Peter 3:15-16 (ESV)

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the **Scripture** says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”

1 Timothy 5:17-18 (ESV)

Authoritative Apostolic Letters

Matthew

John

Romans - Philemon (Pauline epistles)

James

1 & 2 Peter

1, 2, 3, John

Revelation



Authoritative Apostolic Letters

Mark?

Luke-Acts?

Hebrews?

Jude?



the Gospel of Mark

“John the Presbyter also said this, Mark being the interpreter of Peter, whatsoever he recorded he recorded with great accuracy... Wherefore Mark has not erred in anything... Matthew composed his history in the Hebrew dialect, and every one translated it as he was able.”

Daniel Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible*, chapter 4.

the Gospel of Luke - Acts of Apostles

“...at some he [Mark?] was present [with Peter], and so he set them down. The third book of the Gospel, that according to Luke... whom Paul had taken like a legal expert [*quasi ut iuris studiosum*], who wrote in his own name on Paul’s authority [*nomine suo ex opinione*].”

Daniel Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible*, chapter 4.

Authoritative Apostolic Letters

- Mark ✓
- Luke-Acts ✓
- Hebrews?
- Jude?



Authoritative Apostolic Letters

Mark ✓

Luke-Acts ✓

Hebrews ✓

Jude ?



“My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me.”

John 10:27 (ESV)

“Let no one add to these; let nothing be taken away,”

A.D. 367 *Festal Letter*, bishop Athanasius of Alexandria

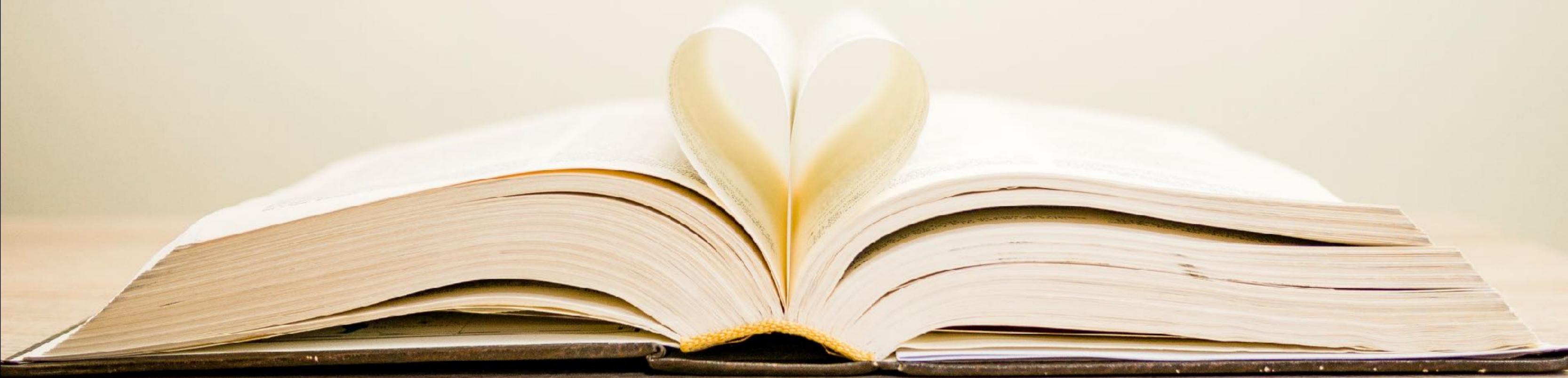
“aside from the canonical Scriptures nothing is to be read in church under the Name of Divine Scriptures.”

A.D. 397 Council of Carthage

One Spirit, one Author, one people
= consensus on NT canon



death of last living apostle = closing
of the canon



One Spirit, one Author, one message



summary

- ❖ if God resumed speaking through Jesus, then canal is reopened
- ❖ Jesus' teaching is found in the teaching of the apostles whom he sent
- ❖ Holy Spirit taught apostles what to write & teach
- ❖ Apostolic writing = NT canon
- ❖ with the death of last apostle, canon is again closed

THE BIBLE VS. WORLD RELIGIONS

How does the Bible differ from the texts revered by other religions?