

### C. THE DIVISIONS OF THE CANON

#### 1. The Main Idea

We champion the idea that the canon of the Old Testament found itself in three major divisions: the **Law**, the **Prophets**, and the **Writings**, and that these divisions concurred with the use of the Scriptures in the synagogue services. Not all scholars agree and there is considerable discussion on the subject. (See R. Laird Harris: *INSPIRATION AND CANONICITY* for detail in other views.) But it is the view that seems the best to the present teacher although omniscience is not one of his better traits and you will understand a broad allowance for divergence of view.

##### a. The antiquity of the idea

The threefold division of the canon is dependent on the following major references:

- The prologue of Ecclesiasticus
- Philo
- Luke 24
- Josephus (canon breakdown)

While the canon is not discussed corporately by these sources the references are to a body that is marked by a threefold division and that is what we think it was.

##### b. The basis for the Division

This is admittedly speculative but we think that the division is based on the use of the Old Testament in the religious services of Israel. This follows the line put out by Wilson, Stuart, etc. and the idea is that the arrangement of the O.T. allowed a liturgical study and reading of the O.T. in the worship practices of the synagogue. The law was read on a regular cyclic basis, hence it had first place: the prophets were read at the desire or will of the elders or teachers, and so were given second place; while the writings were read for special occasions, festivals, feasts, etc. This view thinks more of the use of the books than of the content. The starting point, of course, finds them all inspired.