

# **How We Got the Bible**

## **Lesson 10 - The Apocryphal Books**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. Aim: To discuss why the Apocryphal books should not be a part of the canon.
2. When asked how many books are in the Bible we know the answer. 66
3. But there are some religious groups who have more than the usual 66 books.
4. Generally speaking, the apocryphal books are those extra books found interspersed in the Old Testament of the Catholic Bible. (Twelve of the fifteen books are included.)

### **Discussion**

#### **I. THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS**

##### A. Terminology

1. "Apocrypha"
  - a. From the Greek word meaning "hidden," "secretive," "concealed"
  - b. Eventually referred to books of doubtful origin
  - c. Finally referred to books as "non-canonical"
  - d. Generally the term means those extra books found in the O.T. of the Catholic Bible.
  
2. "Deuterocanonical"
  - a. The extra books in the Roman Catholic Bible
  - b. Not the original or first (Gk., "proto-") books of the Roman Catholic canon, or "protocanonical"
  - c. The secondary (Gk., "deutero-") canon
  - d. Deutero Canonical or the second canon is the term that the Catholics use.
  
3. Pseudepigrapha -
  - a. Writings falsely attributed to biblical characters or times
  - b. A body of texts written between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200 and spuriously ascribed to various prophets and kings of Hebrew Scriptures.
  - c. The spurious writings (other than the canonical books and the Apocrypha) professing to be biblical in character, as the Books of Enoch.

##### B. Apocryphal books of the Old Testament

1. Includes 14 or 15 books written between 300 B.C. and A.D. 100
2. List of books
  - a. The First Book of Esdras (also known as Third Esdras)

- b. The Second Book of Esdras (also known as Fourth Esdras)
  - c. Tobit
  - d. Judith
  - e. The Additions to the Book of Esther
  - f. The Wisdom of Solomon
  - g. Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach
  - h. Baruch
  - i. The Letter of Jeremiah (This letter is sometimes incorporated as the last chapter of Baruch. When this is done, the number of books is fourteen instead of fifteen.)
  - j. The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men
  - k. Susanna
  - l. Bel and the Dragon
  - m. The Prayer of Manasseh
  - n. The First Book of Maccabees
  - o. The Second Book of Maccabees
3. The Old Testament Apocrypha and Western Bibles
- a. 1 & 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh are considered as non-canonical in the Catholic Bible (although some use the names for Ezra & Nehemiah)
  - b. The remaining twelve books interspersed in the Catholic Old Testament
  - c. Protestant English Bibles since 1535 (including the King James Version) contained the Apocrypha at the end of the Old Testament - 54 books
- C. Contents of these books
- 1. Historical
    - a. 1 Esdras ("Greek Ezra")
      - (1) Some material found in Ezra (the canonical "Hebrew Ezra")
      - (2) Legendary material interspersed
    - b. 1 & 2 Maccabees
      - (1) Named for Judas, nicknamed Maccabeus, for leading a revolt against the Syrians in 2nd cent. B.C.
      - (2) 1 Macc. considered historically valuable; 2 Macc. much less valuable
  - 2. Legendary
    - a. Tobit
      - (1) Written about 200 B.C.
      - (2) Fictitious account of a Jewish captive to Nineveh (Assyria) who was devoted to the Law
    - b. Judith-supposedly about a Jewish widow who kills the leader of Israel's enemy

- c. Additions to Esther-possibly oral traditions surrounding the story of Esther
  - d. Additions to Daniel-tales dating about 100 B.C.
    - (1) Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Young Men
    - (2) Susanna
    - (3) Bel and the Dragon
3. Prophetic
- a. Baruch-supposedly written by Baruch, companion of Jeremiah
  - b. Letter of Jeremiah-a tract on the vanity of idolatry, written about 300 B.C.
  - c. 2 Esdras-supposedly a series of revelations given to Ezra, dated about 100 B.C.
4. Ethical/Devotional
- a. Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Sirach-similar to Proverbs, though written about 200 B.C.
  - b. Wisdom of Solomon-a book of Jewish philosophy traced to Alexandria
  - c. Prayer of Manasseh-supposedly a penitent prayer of King Manasseh after he was taken captive to Babylon
5. Note: Some books very valuable
- a. 1 Macc.-mostly historical
  - b. Ecclesiasticus-study of Paul's teaching on righteousness
  - c. Prayer of Manasseh-on repentance
- D. Why these books are rejected
- 1. They were never included in the Hebrew canon by the Jews
  - 2. They were never quoted by Jesus and His apostles
  - 3. They were rejected by Jewish and Christian writers in the early centuries of Christianity
  - 4. They do not bear intrinsic qualities of inspiration: historical, chronological and geographical accuracy
  - 5. They have been shrouded with continual uncertainty
  - 6. They cannot be maintained on a compromise basis of semi-canonical status
  - 7. They cannot be made canonical by a ruling of the Council of Trent (1546)

- E. A frequent question - Why do Jude 9 and 14-15 refer to stories not found in the Hebrew Old Testament?
  - 1. The Bible does use some non-canonical material
    - a. Jannes and Jambres (2 Tim. 3:8)
    - b. The Greek prophets/"poets" (Tit. 1:12; Acts 17:28)
  - 2. Such limited use does not mean "canonical"

## II. The apocryphal books of the New Testament

- A. Dating from the 2nd cent. A.D.
- B. Contains the same types of literature (not the same quality) as the New Testament
  - 1. Gospels
    - a. Gospel of Peter-two "men" carry Jesus out of the tomb, with the cross following them
    - b. Protevangelium of James-Mary dedicated as a virgin at age 3
    - c. Gospel of Bartholomew
    - d. Infancy Story of Thomas-Jesus struck a child dead who bumped Him
  - 2. Acts
    - a. Acts of Peter
    - b. Acts of John-John commanded bedbugs to behave themselves
    - c. Acts of Paul-Paul baptized a lion that eventually spared him from death
  - 3. Letters
    - a. Epistle to the Laodiceans
    - b. Apocalypses
    - c. Apocalypse of Peter
- C. Note: the place of the Apostolic Fathers (A.D. 95-155)
  - 1. Letters of edification
  - 2. No claim of apostolic wisdom or authority
  - 3. Sometimes marketed with the apocryphal and/or pseudepigraphal books wrongly as "the Lost Books of the Bible"
- D. Summary
  - 1. "Apocrypha" synonymous with the non-canonical books of the Old and New Testament
  - 2. Normally referring to the additional books in the Old Testament of Roman Catholic Bibles

### **Conclusion** - Review questions

1. What is the Apocrypha?
  2. What types of literature form the Old Testament Apocrypha?
  3. Why should the Old Testament Apocrypha be rejected?
  4. Why should the New Testament Apocrypha be rejected?
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### **Sources Consulted**

1. How We Got The Bible 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition by Neil R. Lightfoot
  2. Rocky Whitely Oldham Lane church of Christ Abilene, TX
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