



**WIN Program: Witnessing in Neighborhoods
Advanced Class on Catholicism**

Week Six

The Apocrypha: Is it scripture?

Errors in the Apocrypha

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The Apocrypha: Is it scripture?

[by Matt Slick](#)

The Apocrypha consists of a set of books written between approximately 400 B.C. and the time of Christ. The word "apocrypha" (ἀπόκρυφα) means "Hidden." These books consist of 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, the Rest of Esther, the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, (also titled Ecclesiasticus), Baruch, The Letter of Jeremiah, Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, The Additions to Daniel, The Prayer of Manasseh, and 1 and 2 Maccabees.

The Protestant Church rejects the apocrypha as being inspired, as do the Jews; but in 1546 the Roman Catholic Church officially declared some of the apocryphal books to belong to the canon of scripture. These are Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (also known as Ecclesiasticus), and Baruch. The apocryphal books are written in Greek--not Hebrew (except for Ecclesiasticus, 1 Maccabees, a part of Judith, and Tobit) and contain some useful historical information.

Is the Apocrypha Scripture? Protestants deny its inspiration, but the Roman Catholic Church affirms it. In order to ascertain whether it is or isn't, we need to look within its pages.

Not quoted in the New Testament

First of all, neither Jesus nor the apostles ever quoted from the Apocrypha. There are over 260 quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament and not one of them is from these books. Nevertheless, a Roman Catholic might respond by saying that there are several Old Testament books that are not quoted in the New Testament, i.e., Joshua, Judges, Esther, etc. Does this mean that they aren't inspired either? But, these books had already been accepted into the canon by the Jews--where the Apocrypha had not. The Jews recognized the Old Testament canon, and they did not include the Apocrypha in it. This is significant because of what Paul says:

"Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? 2 Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God." ([Rom. 3:1-2](#)).

Paul tells us that the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. This means that they are the ones who understood what inspired Scriptures were, and they never accepted the Apocrypha.

Jesus' references the Old Testament: from Abel to Zechariah

Jesus referenced the Jewish Old Testament canon from the beginning to the end and did not include the Apocrypha in his reference. "From the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation." ([Luke 11:51](#)).

"The traditional Jewish canon was divided into three sections (Law, Prophets, Writings), and an unusual feature of the last section was the listing of Chronicles out of historical order--placing it after Ezra-Nehemiah and making it the last book of the canon. In light of this, the words of Jesus in [Luke 11:50-51](#) reflect the settled character of the Jewish canon (with its peculiar order) already in his day. Christ uses the expression "from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah," which appears troublesome since Zechariah was not chronologically the last martyr mentioned in the Bible (cf. [Jer. 26:20-23](#)). However, Zechariah is the last martyr of which we read in the Old Testament according to Jewish canonical order (cf. [II Chron. 24:20-22](#)), which was apparently recognized by Jesus and his hearers."[1](#)

This means that the same Old Testament canon, according to the Jewish tradition, is arranged differently than how we have it in the Protestant Bible today. This was the arrangement to which Jesus was referring when he referenced Abel and Zechariah, the first and last people to have their blood shed--as listed in the Old Testament Jewish canon. Obviously, Jesus knew of the Apocrypha and was not including it in his reference.

Jesus references the Old Testament: The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms

Catholics sometimes respond by saying that the Old Testament is referred to in three parts: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. It is these writings that are sometimes said to include the Apocrypha. But this designation is not found in the Bible. On the contrary, Jesus referenced the Old Testament and designated its three parts as the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms--not as the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

"Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ([Luke 24:44](#)).

So we see that the designation offered by the Roman Catholics is not the same designation found in the Bible, and their argument is invalid--as their argument is incorrect. Nevertheless, even if it did say "writings," it would not include the Apocrypha for the above-mentioned reasons.

Church Fathers

Did the Church fathers recognize the Apocrypha as being Scripture? Roman Catholics strongly appeal to Church history, but we don't find a unanimous consensus on the Apocrypha. Jerome (340-420), who translated the Latin Vulgate which is used by the RC church, rejected the Apocrypha since he believed that the Jews recognized and established the proper canon of the Old Testament. Remember, the Christian Church built upon that recognition. Also, Josephus the famous Jewish historian of the First Century never mentioned the Apocrypha as being part of the canon either. In addition, "Early church fathers like Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, and the great Roman Catholic translator Jerome spoke out against the Apocrypha."[2](#) So, we should not conclude that the Church fathers unanimously affirmed the Apocrypha. They didn't.

Errors in the Apocrypha

[by Matt Slick](#)

The apocrypha (ἀπόκρυφα means "hidden") is a set of books written between approximately 400 B.C. and the time of Christ that is rejected by the Protestants and officially accepted by the Roman Catholic Church in 1546 as being inspired. These books are Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (also known as Ecclesiasticus), and Baruch.

But if the Apocrypha is a Scripture, then it should not have any errors. But since it does have errors, as will be demonstrated below, this puts into question whether or not the Roman Catholic Church has properly used its self-proclaimed position as the teaching authority of the Christian Church. If it can error in such an important manner as what is Scripture, can it be trusted to properly teach the Christian Church? The following references can be verified at <http://www.newadvent.org/bible>.

Problems in the Apocrypha

When we look into the apocrypha itself, we find numerous problems. For example, we see it advocating magic where the smoke of a fish heart on a fire drives away devils.

Condoned the use of magic

[Tobit 6:5-7](#), "Then the angel said to him: Take out the entrails of this fish, and lay up his heart, and his gall, and his liver for thee: for these are necessary for useful medicines. 6 And when he had done so, he roasted the flesh thereof, and they took it with them in the way: the rest they salted as much as might serve them, till they came to Rages the city of the Medes. 7 Then Tobias asked the angel, and said to him: I beseech thee, brother Azarias, tell me what remedies are these things good for, which thou hast bid me keep of the fish? 8 And the angel, answering, said to him: If thou put a little piece of its heart upon coals, the smoke thereof driveth away all kind of devils, either from man or from woman, so that they come no more to them."

Is it true that the smoke from a fish's heart, when burned, drives away evil spirits? Of course not. Such a superstitious teaching has no place in the word of God.

Teaches that forgiveness of sins is by human effort.

Salvation by works:

- [Tobit 4:11](#), "For alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness."
- [Tobit 12:9](#), "For alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting."

We know from Scripture that alms (money or food given to the poor or needy as charity) does not purge our sins. The blood of Christ is what cleanses us--not money or food given to poor

people. "but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." ([1 John 1:7](#)).

Money as an offering for the sins of the dead:

2 Maccabees 12:43, "And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection."

Can anyone truly accept that money isn't offering for the sins of dead people? Such a superstitious and unbiblical concept has no place in Scripture.

Historical Errors

Wrong historical facts:

- [Judith 1:5](#), "Now in the twelfth year of his reign, Nabuchodonosor, king of the Assyrians, who reigned in Ninive the great city, fought against Arphaxad and overcame him."
- [Baruch 6:2](#), "And when you are come into Babylon, you shall be there many years, and for a long time, even to seven generations: and after that I will bring you away from thence with peace."

The book of Judith incorrectly says that Nebuchadnezzar was the king of the Assyrians when he was the king of the Babylonians.[1](#)

[Baruch 6:2](#) says the Jews would serve in Babylon for seven generations where [Jer. 25:11](#) says it was for 70 years. "And this whole land shall be a desolation and a horror, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years."

Conclusion

Obviously the apocrypha has serious problems. From magic, to salvation by works, to money as an offering for the sins of the dead, and blatant incorrect historical facts--it is full of false and unbiblical teachings. It isn't inspired of God. Likewise, neither is the Roman Catholic Church, which has stated the Apocrypha is inspired. This shows the Roman Catholic Church is not the means by which God is communicating his truth to his people, that the Magisterium has erred greatly, and that it is infested with man's false tradition rather than God's absolute truth.