

DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE
Ancient Books and Extra-Biblical Texts
Lesson #3

When one begins to study ancient books related to the Bible, it can become confusing. Many are aware that the Catholic Bible contains additional books which Protestants do not believe are inspired. There is also a class of books which all have rejected, and another class of books which only some have questioned. In this lesson we will attempt to sort out the different categories of Ancient books. We will look at various groups or categories of books that some believe are inspired. We will also look at ancient books mentioned in the Bible, which are not part of the inspired canon, but which are mentioned by the writers of Scripture.

I. ANTILEGOMENA

- A. The term antilegomena means spoken against. These are the books which we believe are inspired, but which some early church Fathers did not believe were inspired.¹

THE ANTILEGOMENA BOOKS AND WHY THEY WERE QUESTIONED	
Song of Solomon	The Song of Solomon was rejected by some on the grounds that it was too sensual.
Ecclesiastes	Ecclesiastes was rejected by some because it was thought to be too skeptical and cynical.
Esther	The book of Esther was questioned by some because it didn't mention God by name. Some thought its theme and content was unspiritual.
Ezekiel	Some rejected this book because they thought it contradicted the teachings of Moses.
Proverbs	Some rejected Proverbs because some proverbs seemed illogical and because they thought the book contradicted itself.

- B. The reason the Antilegomena (disputed books) were accepted as part of the holy Bible
 - 1. Though the antilegomena books were disputed by some of the rabbis and early church Fathers, there was such wide spread agreement about their authenticity that the attempts to discredit them were never successful. One might wonder if a non-inspired book ever crept in to the biblical canon. Yet, when one sees the history of attacks on the Bible it is comforting to know that every book has been scrutinized for centuries. The church has long recognized which books were inspired. It is

¹Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pg. 257

important to remember that the Scriptures were used by competing religious groups such as the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes, who would not have tolerated another group adding to the Bible. They kept each other in check so that it is very unlikely that a book could ever have crept in without a sustained dispute.²

II. **APOCRYPHA³**

A. The term apocrypha means different things to different groups. [Usually] it refers, as in the common non-Roman Catholic use, to 14 or 15 specific documents from antiquity. These were composed during the last two centuries before Christ and in the first century afterwards.⁴

APOCRYPHAL BOOKS		
The First book of Esdras (rejected by Catholics)	The Wisdom of Solomon	Susanna (added as ch. 13 of Daniel)
The Second Book of Esdras (rejected by Catholics)	Ecclesiasticus (or the wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach)	Bell and the Dragon (added as ch. 14 of Daniel)
Tobit	Baruch (added at the end of Jeremiah)	The Prayer of Manasseh (rejected by Catholics)
Judith	The Letter of Jeremiah	The First book of Maccabees
The additions to the book of Esther (added to Esther)	The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of Three Young Men (added in between Daniel chs. 3 & 4)	The Second book of Maccabees

B. Reasons Roman Catholics believe the apocrypha is inspired and why Protestants do not.

1. The Catholics include the Apocryphal books in their Bibles for many reasons, which will be contrasted in the chart below with the reasons why the Protestants have been determined to leave them out.⁵ In general, the

²Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pg. 258.

³ **Note:** In lesson 11 of this series we will examine the Apocryphal books accepted by the Catholic Church in more detail.

⁴G. Douglas Young, *Revelation and the Bible*, pg. 171.

⁵ The information for this chart was taken from: Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pgs. 266-274.

Roman Catholic Church accepts what is called the Alexandrian Canon⁶ while the Protestants accept what is called the Palestinian Canon. The Palestinian Canon contains those books widely accepted by the Jews in Palestine. The Alexandrian Canon are those books which arose from Alexandria Egypt where the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek about 250 BC.

Chart created from information in *A General Introduction to the Bible* by Geisler and Nix, pgs. 266-270

Catholic Arguments for the Apocrypha being included in the Bible	Protestant Arguments against the Apocrypha being included in the Bible
The New Testament has some similarities with the Apocrypha e.g. Heb. 11:35 cf. II Macc. 7, 12.	There may be allusions similar to the Apocrypha in the Bible but no direct quotations from any New Testament author.
The New Testament quotes from the LXX which contained the Apocrypha.	The earliest copies of the LXX we have are from the fourth century AD. The inclusion of the Apocrypha in these early texts does not mean the Apocrypha was considered to be inspired.
Some of the early church Fathers quoted the Apocrypha as if it were Scripture.	Of the few quotations from the Apocrypha found in the writings of the Early Church Fathers, most are taken from apocrypha books that were appended from other inspired books such as Daniel or Jeremiah. When reading the Early Church Fathers, one finds the inspired books of the Bible are quoted frequently but the Apocryphal books only seldom.
Some of the early church Fathers accepted the Apocrypha as inspired e.g. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria.	While some individuals believed the Apocrypha to be inspired, no council of the early church concluded that the Apocryphal books were inspired. Many early church fathers were decidedly against their inclusion to the canon such as Origen, Athanasius, Jerome, and Cyril of Jerusalem.
Catacomb scenes depicted Apocryphal stories.	This proves nothing except that the early Christians were familiar with some of the stories in the Apocryphal writings.
The great Greek manuscripts (, A, and B) contain the Apocrypha.	None of the great Greek manuscripts contain all of the Apocryphal books and only four Apocryphal books are contained in all of them. The oldest manuscript, called Vaticanus, does not contain the book of Maccabees.
The Syriac Church accepted the Apocrypha.	The Syriac Church rejected the Apocrypha until the fourth century.

⁶The word canon means rule or standard. Here it is used to describe a collection of books thought to be inspired. To say that Roman Catholics and Protestants disagree on the canon of Scripture is to say that they disagree as to which books belong in the Bible as the rule or standard of God.

Catholic Arguments for the Apocrypha being included in the Bible	Protestant Arguments against the Apocrypha being included in the Bible
Augustine and the councils he influenced (Hippo 393 and Carthage) accepted them.	Augustine is the only significant early church father who recognized the Apocrypha as inspired. Yet, his contemporary, Jerome, a greater biblical scholar, rejected them. Augustine admitted that the Apocrypha was rejected by the Jews. Augustine argued that the apocryphal books should be included because they mentioned certain martyrs of the faith. But on that grounds we should also accept <i>Foxe's Book of Martyrs</i> as inspired as it contains the testimonies of many martyrs. Augustine's acceptance of the Apocrypha most likely stemmed from the false notion that the LXX (an old Greek translation of the Old Testament) was inspired.
Eastern Orthodox Church accepts them.	The Eastern Orthodox church is still undecided about the inspiration of the Apocrypha and even as late as 1839 left them out of their larger catechism.
Roman Catholic church officially accepted them at the council of Trent 1546.	The Catholic Church didn't officially recognize the Apocrypha until the Council of Trent between 1545-1563. The reason they were officially included as inspired during the reformation is that the Roman Catholic Church could not support some of their doctrines from the Bible, so they canonized the Apocrypha in reaction to the reformation.
The apocryphal books were contained in many Protestant Bibles until the 1800's.	The Apocryphal books, which did appear in Protestant Bibles before 1800, were grouped together and placed in a separate section because they were not considered to be equal in authority with the inspired writings of Scripture.
Some of the apocryphal books have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. (The Dead Sea Scrolls were written by an ancient community that lived near the Dead Sea around the time of Jesus.)	Many other books were also found at Qumran but that does not mean they were considered to be inspired. There were no commentaries found on any Apocryphal books among the dead sea scrolls. There were also no Apocryphal books recorded with the special parchment and script used for the accepted books of the Bible.

C. What criteria was used to reject the Apocrypha as not inspired?

Neil Lightfoot gives six basic reasons why the Apocrypha was rejected:⁷

1. They were never included in the Hebrew Old Testament.
2. They were never accepted as inspired by Jesus or the Apostles.

⁷Neil Lightfoot, *How We Got Our Bible*, pg. 123.

3. They were not accepted by some of the most significant biblical scholars and early church fathers.
4. They do not have the same qualities as inspired books.
5. Their inclusion into the Bible has always been opposed by the majority of the church.
6. They cannot be accepted since they are rejected by the majority of biblical scholars.
7. The Catholic Church does not have the infallible authority to make or declare a book to be inspired.

III. **HOMOLOGOUMENA**

The word Homologoumena means to have agreement. The Homologoumena are the books of the Bible accepted by a large majority of both Roman Catholics and Protestants. They include all thirty-four of the Old Testament books, except for the antilegomena i.e., Song of Solomon, Esther, Ezekiel, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, which were only disputed by a few.⁸

IV. **PSEUDEPIGRAPHA**

The word Pseudepigrapha means false writings, spurious. It is a term used of those books which are rejected as uninspired by nearly everyone.⁹ The Pseudepigraphal books of both the Old Testament and New Testament era are well over 50 in number. There are 18 common books that are often mentioned in the list as belonging to the Pseudepigrapha and they are recorded in the chart below.

COMMONLY RECOGNIZED PSEUDEPIGRAPHAL BOOKS					
The book of Jubilee	The Martyrdom of Isaiah	The Sibylline Oracle	Second Baruch, or the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch	Fourth Maccabees	The Psalms of Solomon
The Letter of Aristeas	First Enoch	The Assumption of Moses	Third Baruch or the Greek Apocalypse of Baruch	Pirke Aboth	Psalms 151

⁸Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pg. 257

⁹Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pg. 257

COMMONLY RECOGNIZED PSEUDEPIGRAPHAL BOOKS					
The book of Adam and Eve	The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs	Second Enoch, or the Secrets of Enoch	Third Maccabees	The Story of Ahikar	The Fragment of a Zadokite Work

V. **SCRIPTURAL PROOF OF ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS USED AS BIBLICAL RESOURCES**

Among the ancient manuscripts are those manuscripts which have never been found, but which are mentioned in the Bible. It is important to note that most of these references are found in **First and Second Chronicles**. After Israel spent 70 years in Babylon, God raised up Ezra the scribe to help establish Judaism among the people of Israel. Ezra was a brilliant scholar and a man of God (**Ezra 7:1-10**). Because the people of Israel had been in captivity for nearly two generations Ezra wanted to encourage them with a historical account of the positive examples of the good kings of Judah. In order to do this, he wrote **First and Second Chronicles** emphasizing the covenant God made with David and proper temple worship. He specifically left out all of the bad kings of Israel and Judah and the sins of the good kings. He was not trying to rewrite history but record the positive examples of the godly kings of the past so Israel could learn from their good examples. It is clear from the many references to extra Biblical books in **First and Second Chronicles** that the Jews took many ancient records with them to Babylon which Ezra had access to and used to write **First and Second Chronicles**. It must be noted that just because Ezra used uninspired books as references this does not mean that **First and Second Chronicles** are not inspired. God allowed Ezra to learn from non-inspired books and the Holy Spirit used what Ezra learned and superintended his writings so that the product was the perfect Word of God. The chart below gives Scripture references to extra biblical books mentioned in the Bible.¹⁰

Verse Reference	SOURCE BOOK MENTIONED
Numbers 21:14	14Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the Lord , Waheb in Suphah, And the wadis of the Arnon,
Joshua 10:13;	13So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, Until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar ? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day.
II Sam. 1:18	18and he told them to teach the sons of Judah the song of the bow; behold, it is written in the book of Jashar .

¹⁰This chart was adapted from John Walton's work, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*, pg. 15.

Verse Reference	SOURCE BOOK MENTIONED
I Chron. 9:1;	1So all Israel was enrolled by genealogies; and behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel . And Judah was carried away into exile to Babylon for their unfaithfulness.
II Chron. 20:34	34Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first to last, behold, they are written in the annals of Jehu the son of Hanani, which is recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel .
I Chron. 29:29	29 Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Samuel the seer , in the chronicles of Nathan the prophet and in the chronicles of Gad the seer,
I Chron. 29:29	29 Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Samuel the seer, in the chronicles of Nathan the prophet and in the chronicles of Gad the seer ,
I Chron. 29:29	29 Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Samuel the seer, in the chronicles of Nathan the prophet and in the chronicles of Gad the seer,
II Chron. 9:29	29Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, from first to last, are they not written in the records of Nathan the prophet , and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat?
II Chron. 9:29;	29Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, from first to last, are they not written in the records of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat?
12:15;	15Now the acts of Rehoboam, from first to last, are they not written in the records of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer , according to genealogical enrollment? And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually.
13:22	22Now the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways and his words are written in the treatise of the prophet Iddo .
II Chron. 12:15	15Now the acts of Rehoboam, from first to last, are they not written in the records of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer, according to genealogical enrollment? And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually.
II Chron. 20:34	34Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first to last, behold, they are written in the annals of Jehu the son of Hanani, which is recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel .
II Chron. 24:27	27As to his sons and the many oracles against him and the rebuilding of the house of God, behold, they are written in the treatise of the Book of the Kings . Then Amaziah his son became king in his place.
II Chron. 32:32	32Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and his deeds of devotion, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet , the son of Amoz, in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. (See Isaiah 1:1)

Verse Reference	SOURCE BOOK MENTIONED
<p>II Chron. 27:7;</p> <p>35:27;</p> <p>36:8</p>	<p>7Now the rest of the acts of Jotham , even all his wars and his acts, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.</p> <p>27and his acts, first to last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.</p> <p>8Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim and the abominations which he did, and what was found against him, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. And Jehoiachin his son became king in his place.</p>
<p>II Chron. 16:11;</p> <p>25:26;</p> <p>28:26;</p> <p>32:32</p>	<p>11Now, the acts of Asa from first to last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.</p> <p>26Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, from first to last, behold, are they not written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel?</p> <p>26Now the rest of his acts and all his ways, from first to last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.</p> <p>32Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and his deeds of devotion, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.</p>
<p>II Chron. 33:18</p>	<p>18Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh even his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the Lord God of Israel, behold, they are among the records of the kings of Israel.</p>
<p>II Chron. 33:19</p>	<p>19His prayer also and how God was entreated by him , and all his sin, his unfaithfulness, and the sites on which he built high places and erected the Asherim and the carved images, before he humbled himself, behold, they are written in the records of the Hozai.</p>
<p>II Chron. 35:4</p>	<p>4 Prepare yourselves by your fathers households in your divisions, according to the writing of David, king of Israel and according to the writing of his son Solomon.</p>

VI. **SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND REMEMBER**

- A. Satan has labored throughout the years to corrupt the Bible by adding to it. Yet God, through His people, has faithfully preserved the Biblical text.
- B. There are many ancient religious books that relate to the Bible but are not inspired. These books contain valuable information about people, places and the Bible.
- C. It is encouraging to know that God has used factions and divisions in the church to help preserve His Word. He has also used faithful Bible students and scholars throughout the years to diligently examine the text of Scripture in order to keep the Biblical canon from being corrupted by the inclusion of uninspired works.
- D. When you encounter a Roman Catholic that believes the Apocryphal books are inspired, remember, they believe that the church is over the Bible and they have an entire library of inspired works that they believe are equal in authority to the Bible.
- E. Remember that Biblical writers often used extrabiblical resources for information.