

**SESSION TWO: The Apocrypha and the Formation of the Greek Bible<sup>1</sup>****Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha**

## I. What are the “Apocrypha”?

- A. The Apocrypha are a collection of popular Jewish literature that was mostly written during the time between the Old and New Testaments (i.e. the “Intertestamental Period”).
- B. There are 15 books which are considered apocryphal: The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (aka Sirach), Tobit, Judith, 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Baruch, The Letter of Jeremiah, Additions to Esther, Prayer of Azariah, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, and the Prayer of Manasseh.
1. The Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox church holds to these books as Scripture. Rather than calling them “Apocrypha,” they refer to them as the “deuterocanonical” books.
- B. What about the Pseudepigrapha?
1. These are the same types of books as the Apocrypha, however, they were never considered Scripture by anyone. Neither Protestants, Catholics, or Eastern Orthodox include them in their Bibles.
  2. Here are some examples of pseudepigraphal books: Jubilees, 1 and 2 Enoch, 2 and 3 Baruch, Psalm 151, 3 and 4 Maccabees, The Martyrdom of Isaiah, etc.

## II. What should we do with the Apocrypha?

- A. Here are ten reasons why we **should not** accept the Apocrypha as Scripture
1. *The Jews rejected it:* The Jews have never regarded the apocryphal books as Scripture. None of the Jewish witnesses we looked at before (Josephus, Aquila, Theodotian, Symmachus, the Talmud, Jamnia, etc.) mentioned these books as canonical, nor did they imply that they were considered Scripture. Instead, the Jews understood that these were simply books written by Jews about Jews, and used them for study and edification, but never as Scripture. Moreover, the Jews believed that prophecy and new special revelation from God ceased with the closure of the TaNaK.
  2. *The Dead Sea Scrolls:* In the caves at Qumran, 225 manuscripts from the TaNaK (every book but Esther) were discovered, along with 670 manuscripts of non-canonical writings from the people at Qumran. Of the 15 apocryphal books, only 3 passages were found: a few parts of Sirach and parts of Tobit, and a tiny portion of the Epistle of Jeremiah.
  3. *The Septuagint (LXX):* It is often claimed that the Septuagint translation included the Apocrypha, but that is anachronistic (i.e. it belongs to a period other than that being portrayed). The oldest complete manuscripts of the LXX that we have today (Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, Sinaiticus) are from the 4<sup>th</sup>—5<sup>th</sup> century and they include the Apocrypha, *however* most of the Apocrypha was written *after* the LXX was originally translated. These manuscripts are from 600 years after the translation was completed. The LXX was translated from 250-150 BC and the Apocrypha was written from 150 BC–100 AD, so the original translation of the LXX could not have included the Apocrypha.
  4. *Language and Autographs:* Though no autographs exist for either the Hebrew or Greek Bible, we have original language manuscripts. With the Apocrypha, the original

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<sup>1</sup> Much of this information is adapted with consent from the class notes and lectures of Dr. Ray Lubeck of Multnomah University. *Do not copy or reproduce these notes without explicit permission.*

languages are unknown. We have no autographs, and we have no clue whether they were originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic, or if they were written in Greek, like most of the manuscripts we have of them today.

5. *Internal claims*: There is not a single claim within the Apocrypha to inspiration, or any implication that it is the word of God. This is different than the actual books of the Old and New Testaments.

6. *Origen*: In his massive work, the *Hexapla*, Origen did not include any of the Apocrypha. If he was going to write out the entire Hebrew Bible *six times by hand*, you would think he would want to be clear on which books were actually Scripture, and he would not want to leave any out!

7. *Jerome*: When he translated the Bible into Latin (i.e. the *Vulgate*), Jerome refused to translate the Apocrypha because he did not believe they should be in the Bible. Though, under intense pressure he allowed others to translate it.

8. *Council of Trent*: It was not until the Council of Trent in 1546 that the Roman Catholic Church officially recognized the “deuterocanonical” status of the Apocrypha. In large part, these books were accepted as part of the Counter-Reformation to validate church practices that could not be scripturally supported otherwise.

9. *The New Testament*: No author of the New Testament *ever quotes* or *alludes* to the Apocrypha, though they quote and allude to the OT copiously. If these books were considered Scripture, you would assume that the writers would reference them just as often as the other books of the Hebrew Bible. (*Side note*: The book of Jude quotes and alludes to the pseudepigraphal books 1 Enoch and the Assumption of Moses. However, *no one* (not even Roman Catholics) has ever believed that either of these books were canonical.

10. *Jesus*: Jesus anchors his identity in the story of the Hebrew Bible, however, he makes *no reference* to the Apocrypha, and he also implies closure of the TaNaK (Luke 11:50-51, 24:44). This shows that Jesus himself did not consider the apocryphal books to be Scripture.

### III. Conclusion

A. Based on these ten reasons (which are not exhaustive), we can clearly and confidently say that the apocryphal books *should not* be included in the Christian canon and are not to be identified as Scripture.

B. Though the Apocrypha should not be considered Scripture and thus should not be included in our Bibles, there are several uses for them. For one, these books can act as any other book and can speak things that are in fact true, as long as they align with Scripture. Also, the Apocrypha provide us with valuable historical information, and show us how Jews were interpreting and applying their Scriptures. They also act as a witness to the true books of the Hebrew Bible, as we saw last session.

## The Formation of the Greek Bible (New Testament)

### I. The Greek Language

A. The New Testament was written entirely in Koine Greek. Since we referred to the Old Testament as the Hebrew Bible in order to avoid the stigma of the word “old,” it will be helpful to refer to the New Testament as the “Greek Bible.”

B. Greek is the earliest Indo-European language. The order of letters and letter names are comparable to Hebrew.

1. For example, Hebrew begins with Aleph, Bet, Gimel, and Dalet. Greek begins with Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta.

2. Here is the entire Greek alphabet:

α β γ δ ε ζ η θ ι κ λ μ ν ξ ο π ρ σ (ς) τ υ φ χ ψ ω  
 Α Β Γ Δ Ε Ζ Η Θ Ι Κ Λ Μ Ν Ξ Ο Π Ρ Σ Τ Υ Φ Χ Ψ Ω

C. Because of the influence of Alexander the Great, Greek became the international trade language (i.e. the lingua franca) from around 330 BC to 330 AD. The type of Greek that was spread was called “Koine,” which is the Greek word for “common.”

1. The fact that Greek became the international trade language is significant, because it gave the Western world a single, common language through which the Gospel could be preached and understood. It seems that in God’s providence, he was preparing the world for the spread of the Gospel. Furthermore, God chose to reveal himself in the common language of the day, in a way that was accessible and understandable to everyone, whether poor or rich, educated or not.

### II. The Autographs

A. Again, the autographs are the original texts that were written by the author. Just as with the Hebrew Bible, we do not have any surviving autographs of the Greek New Testament.

B. However, we can see that New Testament authors recognized *immediately* when Scripture was being written. Contrary to popular belief, it was not some men in a church council hundreds of years later who decided which books were Scripture; these books were immediately acknowledged by the Apostles and authors of the New Testament as Scripture.

C. Three Key Passages:

1. *1 Timothy 5:17* “For the Scripture says, ‘Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,’ and ‘The worker deserves his wages.’”

a. Paul introduces these two quotes with the customary introduction for a quote from Scripture: “The Scripture says.” What follows is a quote from Deuteronomy, and then Paul quotes from the Gospel of Luke. Thus, Paul recognizes Luke’s writing as Scripture, equating it with the Hebrew Bible!

2. *2 Peter 3:16* “[Paul] writes the same way in all of his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the *other* Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

a. Here Peter equates Paul’s writings with the other Scriptures. The Greek phrasing in this passage makes it explicit that Peter is including Paul’s writing in the same category as the other Scriptures.

3. *1 Thessalonians 1:13* “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.”

a. Paul acknowledges his own work as “the word of God,” and commends those who recognize this as well.

D. This goes to show, that while the ink was wet, the New Testament authors knew that this was not regular writing, but instead knew that what they had just written was the Word of God.

### III. The Manuscripts

A. The manuscripts of the Greek Bible were copied quickly and in a number of places. There were specific production centers where this copying occurred.

B. The five manuscript copying centers were in Rome, Carthage, Byzantium, Caesarea, and Alexandria.

C. These different copying centers developed into four major “text families”: (1) Western: Rome and Carthage, (2) Byzantine: Byzantium, (3) Caesarean: Caesarea, and (4) Alexandrian: Alexandria.

D. The manuscripts of the Greek Bible were not as carefully copied as those of the Hebrew Bible, and so things are much different in regards to the manuscripts of the New Testament. With certain manuscripts being copied in certain places, each “family” developed its own tendencies. Manuscripts that were passed on and then copied from would “pass on” their traits to the next generation. So for example, if in Byzantium, a certain scribe made an error in copying one of the manuscripts, this could get passed on to a bunch of other Byzantine manuscripts, leading to a mistake that was common in manuscripts from that family. Since most manuscripts we have are not first generation (that is, manuscripts copied directly from the autographs), we must use the process of textual criticism to trace back through the families and detect possible copying mistakes. We will talk about this more in depth later.

### IV. The Impact of Islam on the Greek Bible

A. The Muslims had a major impact on the New Testament through the destruction of manuscript copying centers. They ended up overthrowing four of the five production centers.

B. They overthrew Caesarea in 638 AD, Alexandria in 640 AD, Carthage in 698 AD, and eventually Byzantium in 1453 AD.

C. They never overthrew Rome, *however*, the church in Rome started using the Vulgate in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, which meant that effectively, no more manuscripts were being copied in Rome, except for in Latin.

D. So for 700 years, the only place producing manuscripts was Byzantium. That means today we have many more Byzantine texts than from any other family.

### V. The Influence of Erasmus (1469-1536)

A. Erasmus was a scholar who ended up putting together the first Greek Bible. He used a few very late Byzantine-family Greek manuscripts at the library in Basel to produce an edited Greek New Testament.

B. At the time, there was a race between scholars to be the first to get a Greek New Testament to the printing press. This led to a bit of a rushed and sloppy work by Erasmus, as he was rushing to get the first copy to the press. He had used only about half a dozen manuscripts, and between them, there were over a dozen verses missing. In his haste, he back translated them from the Latin Vulgate into Greek and called it good. He later was ashamed of this and went back and revised his work and published another edition.

C. This first printed edition of the Greek Bible was released in 1515. A later revised edition of his work was released by Beza in 1604 and then by the Elzevir’s in 1633.

D. The Elzevir’s 1633 edition became the standardized Greek text for centuries, which became known as the *textus receptus*. Erasmus’ text was used as the base text for the KJV and all other translations until the late 1800’s, such as the Geneva Bible, Coverdale Bible, Luther Bible, etc.

## VI. Textual Criticism

A. Textual criticism may be defined as “the discipline of restoring the biblical authors’ original words by comparing and contrasting the various copies and translations of the Bible.” (Jason DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, 129).

1. In textual criticism, scholars compare all the manuscript evidence, from manuscripts in the original languages (Greek and Hebrew), early translations (the Septuagint, Targums, Vulgate, etc.), and other textual witnesses such as lectionaries and commentaries. After comparing and contrasting these different witnesses to the text, they then make an educated decision as to what the original reading likely was. Through this process, we can become convinced of the reading of the original autographs.

B. Textual criticism is different between the Greek and Hebrew Bible. With the Hebrew Bible, we have fewer manuscripts, but the quality is very good. The scribes were very copious and meticulously copied the Bible. With the Greek Bible, the opposite is true. Rather than quality, we have an extremely large quantity. The scribes were not reckless, however, they were nowhere near as careful as the scribes of the Hebrew Bible.

C. Through the process of textual criticism we can reconstruct the autographs with only a small degree of uncertainty.

1. “The net result is that there is near unanimous agreement among biblical scholars that the Greek text used to translate our contemporary English versions is very close to the original text of the New Testament. In the small percentage of passages that remain uncertain, one can be sure that the original is either in the text or is the alternative found in the footnote.” (Gordon Fee and Mark Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth*, 113).

2. Scholarship shows that of the entirety of the New Testament, *less than one percent* of the text is truly in question. That is, out of the entire Greek Bible, there is less than one percent where there are variants that are in any way significant. For the Hebrew Bible, the number is nearly the same.

3. At first, the practice of textual criticism may sound unsettling. However, it should really increase our trust in the Bible. Through the process of textual criticism, we seek to discover the original text of Scripture that God inspired, and by this process, we may be convinced of the accuracy of the texts we have today. Is the text of our Hebrew and Greek Bibles today accurate? The answer is a resounding yes. Through textual criticism we may become even more convinced that the Bible we hold in our hands today is the Word of God.

4. Your faith *is not* hanging in the balance over any text critical issue. When we deal with text critical issues, 99% of the time it is something extremely minor, like a spelling mistake or a missing letter or word. There is no major text critical issue that changes any major doctrine or theological position.

## VII. Rules of Textual Criticism

A. What follows are some basic “rules” of textual criticism that scholars follow. In reality, they are really more like guidelines by which scholars make decisions on a verse by verse basis. Obviously, probably none of you will never be making these decisions on your own and evaluating all the text critical data, however, I just wanted to expose you to these principles so that you know what scholars are looking for, and when you see a footnote or study note in your Bibles regarding a text critical decision you will have an idea what went into the process of making that decision.

B. We should give preference to...

1. The shorter variant reading, *because* copyists rarely omitted words, but sometimes added clarifying words. For example, in 1 John 5:7-8, it appears that this verse was an addition inserted to clarify an otherwise obscure and difficult passage.
2. The more difficult reading, *because* copyists sometimes attempt to clarify problematic or ambiguous passages. This means that a reading that disagrees with a parallel passage is more likely original, because a scribe was likely to attempt to harmonize the differences between the two passages (i.e. Luke 11:2-4 in comparison to Matthew 6:9-13).
3. The older reading, *because* the older the manuscript, the closer in time to the original. For example, Matthew 6:13a is not in the earliest manuscripts, and appears to be added later. In fact, it is found only in manuscripts of the Byzantine family, which in general tends to give more expansive readings.
4. The reading with the best manuscript support. There is a certain order in which scholars generally treat manuscripts (Alexandrian → Caesarean → Byzantine → Western). For example, the story of the woman caught in adultery in John 7:53-8:11 is not found in any early manuscripts or in any of the best manuscripts. Thus, it is almost certainly not original.
5. The reading which best explains the rise of all the alternatives, *because* all deliberate (and most unintentional) changes have an explanation (i.e. Romans 8:1, 4).
6. The reading which best fits the author's vocabulary, style, and context. For example, Paul reserves the word *kurios* exclusively for Jesus, while referring the God the Father as *theos* or *pater*. So, later Byzantine texts that say "Lord God" (*theos kurios*) would not be authentic, because this is not how Paul uses the term anywhere else.

## VIII. Varieties of Manuscripts

### A. Oldest fragments: Papyri

1. Papyrus is a reed plant that grows in the arid Mediterranean climate that is woven together and used as paper. Unfortunately, papyrus does not stand up very well to age, and only survives well in dry, arid climates. Thus, the only place where it really survived was in Alexandria.
2. We have some partial New Testament manuscripts that are very old, dated as early as 94 AD. The earliest fragment we have is from 94 AD, and contains John 18:31-33, 37-38.
3. We have 131 papyri manuscripts and fragments (as of July 2016).

### B. Oldest complete manuscripts: Uncials

1. Uncials, also referred to as "majuscules," are capital letter manuscripts from the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century. The uncials are very old and serve as some of the most important witnesses to the New Testament text.
2. The most important uncials are:
  - a. Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲛ) [4<sup>th</sup> Century]: Contains the entire Septuagint and New Testament.
  - b. Codex Alexandrinus (A) [5<sup>th</sup> century]: Contains the entire Septuagint and almost all of the New Testament.
  - c. Codex Vaticanus (B) [4<sup>th</sup> century]: Contains the entire Septuagint and almost all of the New Testament.
3. We have 323 uncial manuscripts (as of July 2016).

### C. Minuscules

1. Minuscules, also referred to as "cursives," are later manuscripts that were written in lowercase/cursive. So, if you are looking at a manuscript and it is written in all capital letters, you know it is very old. If it is written in all lowercase, it was written after the 5<sup>th</sup>

century. While the minuscules are from a later period, we have a way more of them than uncials.

2. We have 2,932 minuscule manuscripts (as of July 2016).

#### D. Lectionaries

1. Lectionaries are ancient Scripture reading portions that contain hand written copies of Scripture and were mostly used in church liturgies.

2. We have 2,463 copies of lectionaries (as of July 2016).

### IX. Reconstructing the Text

A. When reconstructing the text of the Greek Bible through textual criticism, this is the general order that scholars follow:

1. Source One: Greek New Testament Manuscripts. As of July 2016, we have 5,849 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.

2. Source Two: Lectionaries

3. Source Three: Early Translations. We have tens of thousands of manuscripts of ancient translations of the Greek Bible which provide witness to the original text.

a. Syriac Peshitta (c. 431 A.D.)

b. Coptic (Egyptian dialects) from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century

c. Armenian (North of Mesopotamia) from the 4<sup>th</sup> century

d. Georgian (North of Armenia) from the 5<sup>th</sup> century

e. Ethiopic (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century)

f. Latin (Vulgate, 4<sup>th</sup> century): We have more than twice as many Latin manuscripts as Greek.

4. Source Four: Church Fathers

a. We have tons of copies of works from the early church fathers, including: sermons, commentaries, correspondences, etc.

b. The church fathers wrote so prolifically that if we did not have a single Greek manuscript or lectionary, we would still have the entire New Testament, not missing a single verse. In fact, they quote Scripture over 1 million times.

### X. Today's Greek Text

A. Rather than using only a few manuscripts from one text family as Erasmus did, scholars now use manuscripts from all text families. Today's Greek text takes into account (1) Greek manuscripts, (2) Lectionaries, (3) Translations, and (4) Church Fathers. With all these witnesses in hand, scholars create the best possible "eclectic" texts. The standard modern Greek Bible is the USB5 and the NA28, which serve as the base for almost all English translations.

B. With the Hebrew Bible, we don't have all that many manuscripts. We have some major Masoretic Texts, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and a bunch of witnesses to the canon. With the Old Testament, the controversy is more over the books than the text, whereas with the New Testament, the controversy is more over the text than the books. With the Hebrew Bible, we have fewer textual witnesses, with remarkably little variation between them. With the New Testament, the situation is the exact opposite. Instead, we have tens of thousands of witnesses to the text of the Greek Bible, but these witnesses have a lot more variation between them.

#### C. Bottom line

1. With tens of thousands of witnesses to the text of the Greek Bible, there is absolutely no way that anyone could have "hijacked" it in order to get it to read the way they wanted.

- a. This is exactly what is behind the thinking of Dan Brown and the *Da Vinci Code*.
2. However, it is simply not possible for someone to have changed the wording of the text or the canonical books through some church council or private conspiracy. We have different manuscript centers, centuries apart from one another, and thousands of witnesses to the original texts. No one could possibly have taken over all of these to produce their own reading.

#### XI. Canon Formation: Comparing Views

A. There are many different views on the formation of the New Testament canon. Before we examine what appears to be the most coherent and the correct view, it will be helpful to look at some historically popular views.

##### B. The Roman Catholic View

1. The apostles had divinely sanctioned authority for all matters of faith and doctrine.
2. The popes and magisterium (ruling authority) are invested with the same authority as the original apostles through “apostolic succession.”
3. So it is the church who chooses the right canon (list of books).
4. Therefore, it makes no difference in what century this is determined. Once the magisterium decides, it is authoritative, fixed, infallible, and binding.
  - a. Historically, the final decision was made in 1546 at the Council of Trent (which included the deuterocanonical/apocryphal books).

##### C. Liberal View

1. The books that are in the Bible(s) were written by ancient men, shaping and reflecting the beliefs of their day.
2. Their origin was entirely human, not “inspired” by God.
3. Therefore, the selection of the books which came to be regarded by various communities of belief (i.e. Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish) was also done by humans, usually for self-authenticating, political purposes.
4. Thus the idea of a “canon” is artificial and entirely arbitrary. A “canon” is entirely a human construct which people use to endorse their preferred beliefs.

##### D. Traditional Protestant and Fundamentalist View

1. God inspired the inerrant books of the Bible.
2. The church then recognized these as God’s Word immediately.
3. The only disagreement with our current books were the result of people holding to false or mistaken views (i.e. Catholic, Orthodox).
4. The canon is reconfirmed to us today by a “criteria of canonicity.”
  - a. The problem with this view is that these “criteria of canonicity” are entirely modern concepts, and most of these “criteria” are ambiguous, subjective, or just plain wrong.

##### E. Modernized Protestant View

1. God inspired the New Testament authors to write books to establish the doctrine of the early church.
2. The selection process which determined the list of canonical books was done by the church councils of the 3<sup>rd</sup>—5<sup>th</sup> century
3. Since the councils themselves possess no ultimate, definitive authority (and who says their decisions were correct?), the question of canon must remain an open one.
  - a. While most proponents of this view would not outright admit this, it is true for them at least in theory. What if we found one of the “lost letters” of Paul?

Or one of those other books mentioned in the Hebrew Bible? Couldn't a new church council be formed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to add a book or two to the canon?

4. Since errant, fallible humans decided which books are "inerrant," this calls into question the very notion of inerrancy.

**F. Modified Conservative View (*The best option*)**

1. The term "canon" is used in different ways, leading to confusion. It appears that there are three different stages in canon development.

a. First Stage (1<sup>st</sup> Century): It **actually was** God's Word, and the original authors and the apostles immediately knew that it was. The true identity of the text was the inspired Word of God, which was known immediately by the authors.

b. Second Stage (2<sup>nd</sup> Century at the latest): It was recognized and used as God's Word within the Church, extending and equivalent to the already-established Old Testament canon. In this stage, it actually **functioned** as Scripture.

c. Third Stage (3<sup>rd</sup>—4<sup>th</sup> century): Formalized lists were compiled to indicate which books were **regarded** as God's Word in the face of challenges. Up until this point, there was no need for such a list. It was only when Gnostic arguments and Marcion's arguments were brought up that the church felt the compulsion to list out what book *had already* been operating as canonical.