

Scripture: Theology, Text & Transmission

Companion slides for lesson #11

Why Learn about the Apocrypha? - Helpful Content

- Helps us learn the context of the New Testament – fills gap of the 400 silent years before Christ.
- Teaches us about the Hellenization crisis (remaining Jewish in the face of Gentile dominance)
- Learn about the Maccabean revolt and the growing Jewish expectation of a political savior to be their Messiah
- Understand that the New Testament teachings sprung from the fertile soil of faithful believers preserving worship of God. NT authors draw from images and ideas present in some of the Apocrypha for their writings.

Why Learn about the Apocrypha? - History & Tradition

- The early church preserved the Apocrypha as useful and “for example of life and instruction of manners” (Jerome)
- Reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin, and Anabaptist leader Menno Simons encouraged the reading of the Apocrypha.
- Apocrypha was included in English Bibles from Wycliffe down until the 1800s.
- A majority of “Christendom” (R.C. & Orthodox) have these books in their Bibles. Anglicans and Lutherans include selections in some church services.
- The ESV (following the KJV and the RSV/NRSV) has translated the Apocrypha.

Testimony for the Apocrypha

“These are books that, though not esteemed like the holy Scriptures, are still both useful and good to read.” ~ **Martin Luther**

“[of Wisdom of Solomon Luther] writes: ‘There are many good things in it, and it is well worth reading....This book is a good exposition and example of the first commandment....and that is the main reason why this book is to be read, so that one may learn to fear and trust God, so that he may help us by his grace.’ ~ **Martin Luther**

(quotes in *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance* by David A. DeSilva, p. 27)

“However strongly evangelicals, as a part of the larger Protestant tradition, reject the Apocrypha as Scripture, they can no more dismiss this corpus from all consideration than they can write off the world and culture into which the Christ was born, and in which the New Testament was written.” ~ **D.A. Carson** (quoted in *Introducing the Apocrypha*:, p. 30)

Cautions about the Apocrypha

The Apocrypha are not useful for establishing doctrine and for that reason were not accepted universally as canonical.

Many of the books contain minor historical and geographic errors, unlike what we find in the Old Testament.

The idea of almsgiving as a way of securing pardon of sins or a heavenly treasury of merit can be found in some of the books of the Apocrypha. (Tobit, Sirach).

A demeaning attitude and view of women is found in some of the books. (Sirach and 1 Esdras).

The idea of praying for the dead – and securing atonement for the dead is found in 2 Maccabees.

Where can you read the Apocrypha

- ESV with Apocrypha can be purchased
- At [BibleGateway.com](https://www.biblegateway.com) you can select NRSV Catholic Edition or NRSV Updated Edition to find the books of the Apocrypha.
- [Apocrypha.org](https://www.apocrypha.org) has the King James Version, World English Bible and Brenton Septuagint (English) translations of the Apocrypha available.

Resources:

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-is-the-apocrypha>

Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance by David A. DeSilva (Baker: 2018)

Tobit

- written in Hebrew/Aramaic 250 - 175 B.C.

Tobit was a pious Jew living in Exile in Nineveh (Assyria)

- He gave alms to poor Jews persecuted by King Sennacherib & others
- He kindly buried forsaken dead bodies (of Jews)
- He became blind while purifying himself after burying the dead
- He was ridiculed even by his wife Anna, and despaired of life 3:1-6

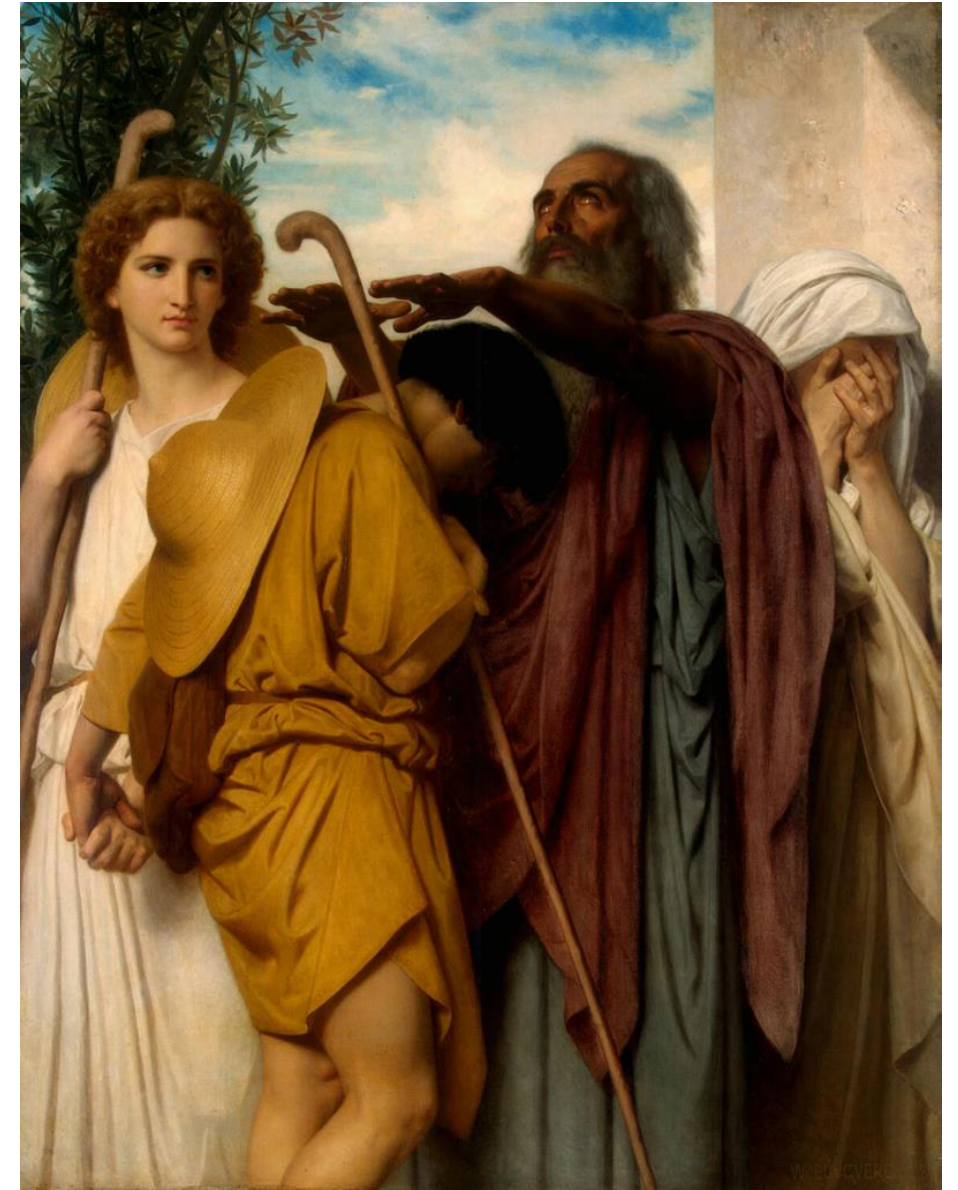
Sarah was a pious Jew living in Ecbatana (Media)

- Had seven husbands who all died on the wedding night (before consummation) from a demon named Asmodeus.
- She too prays for death 3:11-15

God hears both of their prayers and sends the angel **Raphael** to help them.

Tobias, Tobit's son, is sent to recover 10 talents of buried silver (and so be provided for in light of Tobit's hoped-for death)

- Raphael (disguised as a distant relative, Azariah) aids him on his journey
- A large fish attacks Tobias, and Raphael instructs him to capture it and use its gall (for healing eyes) and its heart and liver (for exorcising a demon)
- Raphael leads Tobias on a detour to meet and marry Sarah. He successfully exorcises the demon (whom Raphael chases and binds)
- Much feasting and rejoicing and prayers of thanksgiving follow.
- Finally, Tobit charges his son to leave Nineveh since she will be judged as Nahum the prophet had written



Tobias Saying Good-Bye to His Father, (1860), by William-Adolphe Bouguereau
Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=59217>

Helpful Selections from Tobit

“Look, father, one of our own people has been murdered and thrown into the market place, and now he lies there strangled.” Then I sprang up, left the dinner before even tasting it, and removed the body from the square and laid it in one of the rooms until sunset when I might bury it. When I returned, I washed myself and ate my food in sorrow. Then I remembered the prophecy of Amos, how he said against Bethel, ‘Your festivals shall be turned into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation.’ And I wept. (2:3b - 6) [It was Pentecost]

“...You are righteous, O Lord, and all your deeds are just; all your ways are mercy and truth; you judge the world. And now, O Lord, remember me and look favorably upon me. Do not punish me for my sins and for my unwitting offenses and those that my ancestors committed before you. They sinned against you, and disobeyed your commandments. So you gave us over to plunder, exile, and death, to become the talk, the byword, and an object of reproach among all the nations among whom you have dispersed us. And now your many judgments are true in exacting penalty from me for my sins. For we have not kept your commandments and have not walked in accordance with truth before you. So now deal with me as you will; command my spirit to be taken from me, so that I may be released from the face of the earth and become dust.... For it is better for me to die than to see so much distress in my life and to listen to insults.” (3:1a- 6a, d)

Helpful Selections from Tobit

“My soul blesses the Lord, the great King! For Jerusalem will be built as his house for all ages. How happy I will be if a remnant of my descendants should survive to see your glory and acknowledge the King of heaven. The gates of Jerusalem will be built with sapphire and emerald, and all your walls with precious stones. The towers of Jerusalem will be built with gold, and their battlements with pure gold. The streets of Jerusalem will be paved with ruby and with stones of Ophir. The gates of Jerusalem will sing hymns of joy, and all her houses will cry, ‘Hallelujah! Blessed be the God of Israel!’ and the blessed will bless the holy name forever and ever.” (13:8–10)

“My son, take your children and hurry off to Media, for I believe the word of God that Nahum spoke about Nineveh, that all these things will take place and overtake Assyria and Nineveh. Indeed, everything that was spoken by the prophets of Israel, whom God sent, will occur. None of all their words will fail, but all will come true at their appointed times. So it will be safer in Media than in Assyria and Babylon. For I know and believe that whatever God has said will be fulfilled and will come true; not a single word of the prophecies will fail...” (14:3b–4a)

Misused Selections from Tobit

Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have. So you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity. For almsgiving delivers from death and keeps you from going into the Darkness. Indeed, almsgiving, for all who practice it, is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High. (4:7–11)

Prayer with fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold. For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life, but those who commit sin and do wrong are their own worst enemies. (12:8–10)

Almsgiving – a Catholic mis-use of Tobit

New Testament does emphasize the place of almsgiving.

Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Luke 12:33-34)

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. (1 Tim 6:18-19)

And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. (Acts 10:4)

But it is never stated to be salvific or able to atone from sins.

Roman Catholics have a doctrine of a heavenly treasury of merit from good works

- They use Tobit and other passages (Daniel 4:27, Catholic translation 'atone' instead of 'break off')
- They also read more into the texts above to fit with their traditional view of purgatory, and etc.

Judith

- written in Hebrew or Greek 104 - 63 B.C.

Judith (the name means Jewess) was a pious, wealthy widow.

Story is set in a time when Nebuchadnezzar's army of Assyrians (!!)
commanded by **Holofernes** has besieged the small town Bethulia
(name sounds like Hebrew for virgin *Bethulah*)

She devises a plan to rescue the town and stop the invasion of Judah.
The town leaders give her five days after which they must surrender

She calls on the example of her ancestor **Simeon** who used deceit in
his slaughter of the men of Shechem due to their rape of his sister
Dinah (Gen. 34; see Judith 9:2-4)

She defects to the Assyrians but secures the right to come and go as
she pleases in order to worship God.

Holofernes is determined to seduce her and on the fourth night she
and he are left alone. He falls asleep drunk from too much wine,
however. Judith takes the opportunity to behead him and secret his
head out by night.

Her deed inspires the armies of Israel and dismays the Assyrians –
leading to victory.

[story draws from the account of Jair in Judges, who kills Sisera by
pounding a tent-peg into his skull – Judg. 4:18-21, 5:24-27 (cf. 4:9)]



Judith with the Head of Holofernes, (1613), by Cristofano Allori
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Helpful Selections from Judith

“Who are you to put God to the test today, and to set yourselves up in the place of God in human affairs? You are putting the Lord Almighty to the test, but you will never learn anything! You cannot plumb the depths of the human heart or understand the workings of the human mind; how do you expect to search out God, who made all these things, and find out his mind or comprehend his thought? No, my brothers, do not anger the Lord our God. For if he does not choose to help us within these five days, he has power to protect us within any time he pleases, or even to destroy us in the presence of our enemies. Do not try to bind the purposes of the Lord our God; for God is not like a human being, to be threatened, or like a mere mortal, to be won over by pleading. Therefore, while we wait for his deliverance, let us call upon him to help us, and he will hear our voice, if it pleases him... Therefore, my brothers, let us set an example for our kindred, for their lives depend upon us, and the sanctuary—both the temple and the altar—rests upon us. In spite of everything let us give thanks to the Lord our God, who is putting us to the test as he did our ancestors. Remember what he did with Abraham, and how he tested Isaac, and what happened to Jacob in Syrian Mesopotamia, while he was tending the sheep of Laban, his mother’s brother. For he has not tried us with fire, as he did them, to search their hearts, nor has he taken vengeance on us; but the Lord scourges those who are close to him in order to admonish them.” (8:12 – 17, 24-27)

Helpful Selections from Judith

“For your strength does not depend on numbers, nor your might on the powerful. But you are the God of the lowly, helper of the oppressed, upholder of the weak, protector of the forsaken, savior of those without hope. Please, please, God of my father, God of the heritage of Israel, Lord of heaven and earth, Creator of the waters, King of all your creation, hear my prayer! Make my deceitful words bring wound and bruise on those who have planned cruel things against your covenant, and against your sacred house, and against Mount Zion, and against the house your children possess. Let your whole nation and every tribe know and understand that you are God, the God of all power and might, and that there is no other who protects the people of Israel but you alone!” (9:11-14)

I will sing to my God a new song: O Lord, you are great and glorious, wonderful in strength, invincible. Let all your creatures serve you, for you spoke, and they were made. You sent forth your spirit, and it formed them; there is none that can resist your voice. For the mountains shall be shaken to their foundations with the waters; before your glance the rocks shall melt like wax. But to those who fear you, you show mercy. For every sacrifice as a fragrant offering is a small thing, and the fat of all whole burnt offerings to you is a very little thing; but whoever fears the Lord is great forever. Woe to the nations that rise up against my people! The Lord Almighty will take vengeance on them in the day of judgment; he will send fire and worms into their flesh; they shall weep in pain forever. (16:11-17)

Additions to Esther

- written in Greek by 1st Century B.C.

The Greek version of **Esther** (LXX) differs from the Hebrew OT in a few places by inserting direct mentions of God's name. (4:8; 6:1, 13)

Eventually 6 extra passages were written in Greek and added to the original Hebrew Esther. These provide extra details and major on long prayers to God by Mordecai and Esther.

The passages (Additions A-F) are interspersed throughout the book but were given chapter/verse #s as well (new chapters 11-16).



The Feast of Esther, (1613), by Jan Lievens

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Helpful Selections from Additions to Esther

“O Lord, do not surrender your scepter to what has no being; and do not let them laugh at our downfall; but turn their plan against them, and make an example of him who began this against us. Remember, O Lord; make yourself known in this time of our affliction, and give me courage, O King of the gods and Master of all dominion! Put eloquent speech in my mouth before the lion, and turn his heart to hate the man who is fighting against us, so that there may be an end of him and those who agree with him. But save us by your hand, and help me, who am alone and have no helper but you, O Lord. You have knowledge of all things, and you know that I hate the splendor of the wicked and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised and of any alien. You know my necessity—that I abhor the sign of my proud position, which is upon my head on days when I appear in public. I abhor it like a filthy rag, and I do not wear it on the days when I am at leisure. And your servant has not eaten at Haman’s table, and I have not honored the king’s feast or drunk the wine of libations. Your servant has had no joy since the day that I was brought here until now, except in you, O Lord God of Abraham. O God, whose might is over all, hear the voice of the despairing, and save us from the hands of evildoers. And save me from my fear!” (Addition C [14:11-19])

Wisdom of Solomon

- written in Greek sometime between 220 – and 1 B.C.

Styled as an address from Solomon to the rulers of the Gentile World.

He exhorts them to submit to God's wisdom, abandon idolatry and live righteously or else they will face punishment at the final judgment.

Solomon recounts his prayer for Wisdom and then discusses the benefits of Wisdom through a long personification passage.

Finally, the judgment of the Egyptians in the 10 plagues and the Red Sea is recounted and contrasted with God's provision for Israel. Lessons are drawn from this for current Gentile rulers.

The book:

- Develops the concept of judgment after death
- Highlights the importance of Wisdom
- Warns about Idolatry
- Testifies to creation being a witness to all of God's existence



King Solomon in Old Age, (1866), by Gustave Doré

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Helpful Selections from Wisdom of Solomon

“We are considered by him as something base, and he avoids our ways as unclean; he calls the last end of the righteous happy, and boasts that God is his father. Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous man is God’s child, he will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. Let us test him with insult and torture, so that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance. Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for, according to what he says, he will be protected.” (2:16 - 20)

[Taken as a prophecy of Christ by Augustine, possible allusion to this verse in Matt. 27:43.]

“For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things. For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness. Although she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets;” (7:24 - 27)

[Similar to depictions of Jesus – Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:15]

Helpful Selections from Wisdom of Solomon

“For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator. Yet these people are little to be blamed, for perhaps they go astray while seeking God and desiring to find him. For while they live among his works, they keep searching, and they trust in what they see, because the things that are seen are beautiful. Yet again, not even they are to be excused; for if they had the power to know so much that they could investigate the world, how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of these things?” (13:5 - 9)

[Compare Romans 1:19-20 “without excuse”]

“A potter kneads the soft earth and laboriously molds each vessel for our service, fashioning out of the same clay both the vessels that serve clean uses and those for contrary uses, making all alike; but which shall be the use of each of them the worker in clay decides.” (15:7) [Similar to Rom. 9:21]

“for a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens the thoughtful mind.” (9:15)

[similar to 2 Cor. 5:1, 4 “the tent that is our earthly home” “in this tent we groan, being burdened”]

Helpful Selections from Wisdom of Solomon

“The Lord will take his zeal as his whole armor, and will arm all creation to repel his enemies; he will put on righteousness as a breastplate, and wear impartial justice as a helmet; he will take holiness as an invincible shield, and sharpen stern wrath for a sword, and creation will join with him to fight against his frenzied foes..”
(5:17 - 20) [similar to Ephesians 6:11-17 “whole armor of God”]

[Taken as a prophecy of Christ by Augustine, possible allusion to this verse in Matt. 27:43.]

“But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them.... For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them... They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them forever.” (3:1, 4-6, 8)

[Similar to 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 1 Cor. 6:2-3]

Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus)

- written in Hebrew between 196 – 175 B.C., translated into Greek by Sirach's grandson sometime after 132 B.C.

The author is a Jewish sage from just prior to the Maccabean crisis (at the early period of Hellenization).

His is a Wisdom book like Proverbs but with more thematic development and topical arrangement.

The book represents a curricula for faithful Jews to adhere to in their goal to remain pure in the face of Hellenism.

Many ethical teachings of Sirach are found in the NT – Jesus and James seem to be aware of his teaching. (Matt. 6-7 and James 1)

But some of Sirach's teachings denigrate women (22:3; 25:13-26; 26:10-12; 42:9-14) which is one reason it was not accepted as canonical and is downplayed by later Christian leaders.

Also, Sirach does not teach about post-mortem rewards or punishments – justice is only found in the lasting good name of the righteous and the oblivion or infamy that befalls sinners.



Jesus Ben Sirach, 1860 woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Karolsfeld
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Helpful Selections from Wisdom of Sirach

“Do not babble in the assembly of the elders, and do not repeat yourself when you pray.(7:14) [cf. Matt. 6:7]

[Taken as a prophecy of Christ by Augustine, possible allusion to this verse in Matt. 27:43.]

“O Lord, Father and Master of my life, do not abandon me to their designs, and do not let me fall because of them! ...O Lord, Father and God of my life, do not give me haughty eyes, and remove evil desire from me. (23:1, 4)

[Addressing God as Father in prayer – cf. the Lord’s prayer Matt. 6:9]

“Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray. Does anyone harbor anger against another, and expect healing from the Lord? If one has no mercy toward another like himself, can he then seek pardon for his own sins?” (28:2-4) [Compare Matt. 6:12, 14-15]

“Help the poor for the commandment’s sake, and in their need do not send them away empty-handed. Lose your silver for the sake of a brother or a friend, and do not let it rust under a stone and be lost. Lay up your treasure according to the commandments of the Most High, and it will profit you more than gold. Store up almsgiving in your treasury, and it will rescue you from every disaster;” (29:9-12) [Compare Matt. 6:19-21]

Helpful Selections from Wisdom of Sirach

“Who will set a guard over my mouth, and an effective seal upon my lips, so that I may not fall because of them, and my tongue may not destroy me?” (22:27) “If you blow on a spark, it will glow; if you spit on it, it will be put out; yet both come out of your mouth.” (28:12) “As you fence in your property with thorns, so make a door and a bolt for your mouth. As you lock up your silver and gold, so make balances and scales for your words. Take care not to err with your tongue, and fall victim to one lying in wait.” (28:24-26) [cf. James 3]

“Be quick to hear, but deliberate in answering.” (5:11)

[cf. James 1:19b “be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger”]

“Some he blessed and exalted, and some he made holy and brought near to himself; but some he cursed and brought low, and turned them out of their place. Like clay in the hand of the potter, to be molded as he pleases, so all are in the hand of their Maker, to be given whatever he decides;” (33:12 - 13)

[Similar to Rom. 9:21 (cf. Wisdom of Sol. 15:7)]

Wrongheaded Selections from Wisdom of Sirach

“The birth of a daughter is a loss.” (22:3b)

“Any iniquity is small compared to a woman’s iniquity... (25:19a)

“From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die.” (25:24)

Warns of female daughters’ (perceived) brazen sexuality (cf. 26:10-12)

“Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good; it is woman who brings shame and disgrace.” (42:14)

“As water extinguishes a blazing fire, so almsgiving atones for sin.” (3:30) - similar to Tobit’s error

Baruch (and Letter of Jeremiah)

- written in Hebrew or Greek in the 2nd Century BC

Styled as a letter from Baruch, Jeremiah's assistant (Jer. 36:4ff.)

Includes reflection on Jerusalem's destruction and a prayer of confession.

Has a poetic appeal to Israel to seek the wisdom of God found in Torah.

Offers a lament over the exile with a prophecy of eventual return.

The book ends with a last chapter containing a copy of a "letter of Jeremiah" which is a denunciation of idolatry, in the vein of Jer. 10:2-15.

- This letter was originally a separate book and was added to Baruch.
- Written in Hebrew or Greek before the 1st Century BC.

"This is our God; no other can be compared to him. He found the whole way to knowledge, and gave her to his servant Jacob and to Israel, whom he loved. Afterward she appeared on earth and lived with humankind.." (3:35-37)

[Wisdom/Knowledge as incarnate – church fathers saw this as a prophecy of Christ's incarnation.]



Orthodox icon of Baruch, source:
<https://orthodoxyoftheheart.com/2023/05/15/holy-prophet-baruch/>

Helpful Selections from Baruch

“...we have sinned, we have been ungodly, we have done wrong, O Lord our God, against all your ordinances. Let your anger turn away from us, for we are left, few in number, among the nations where you have scattered us. Hear, O Lord, our prayer and our supplication, and for your own sake deliver us, and grant us favor in the sight of those who have carried us into exile; so that all the earth may know that you are the Lord our God, for Israel and his descendants are called by your name.” (2:12-15)

“Take courage, my children, cry to God, and he will deliver you from the power and hand of the enemy.... For I sent you out with sorrow and weeping, but God will give you back to me with joy and gladness forever. For as the neighbors of Zion have now seen your capture, so they soon will see your salvation by God, which will come to you with great glory and with the splendor of the Everlasting. My children, endure with patience the wrath that has come upon you from God. Your enemy has overtaken you, but you will soon see their destruction and will tread upon their necks.... For just as you were disposed to go astray from God, return with tenfold zeal to seek him. For the one who brought these calamities upon you will bring you everlasting joy with your salvation.” (4:21, 23-26, 28-29)

“Like a scarecrow in a cucumber bed, which guards nothing, so are their gods of wood, overlaid with gold and silver.” (Letter of Jer. vs. 70)

1 + 2 Maccabees

1 Maccabees

- written in Hebrew around 100 BC and preserved in Greek translation

Details the history of the Maccabean revolt.

- 3 sons of Mattathias (a priest who stood against forced apostasy and Hellenization) lead a rebellion against Antiochus IV Epiphanes & Seleucids
- Judas, their leader and general, is nicknamed “The hammerer” (*Maccabeus*)
- He oversees the rededication of the Temple after Antiochus’ “abomination of desolation” (sacrificing a pig on the altar in the Temple)
- Eventually Judas and Jonathan both die, but Simon lives on and becomes a priest of an independent Judea (free from forced Hellenization)

2 Maccabees

- written in Greek in the late 2nd Century BC

Is more like a prequel than a sequel to 1 Mac. but ends before Judas’ death.

Highlights the role of the priests in promoting Hellenization and provides detailed martyr accounts of faithful Jews in Jerusalem

- Eleazar (an old scribe) – who wouldn’t eat swine’s flesh
- Seven brothers – all of whom were martyred by Antiochus IV himself (and lastly the mother dies too)

Error: Judas prays for dead Jewish soldiers who had secretly held onto idols. By his prayer he “made atonement for the dead, so that they might be delivered from their sin” (12:45). [cf. the Roman Catholic idea of purgatory & indulgences]



The Triumph of Judas Maccabeus, (1635), by Peter Paul Rubens
Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20067479>

- written in Hebrew or Aramaic in 2nd Cent. BC or earlier

Susannah and the Elders

A young Jewish wife in Babylon is confronted by 2 elders who will claim they caught her in the act of adultery unless she relents.

She resists and is condemned to death, but the wise Daniel uncovers the plot and restores Susannah's honor.

Bel and the Dragon

The King of Babylon asks Daniel to worship Bel – but he protests that Bel is just an idol. Daniel uncovers that food set before the idol is consumed by the priests and not the false god. The king lets Daniel destroy the Temple of Bel and its priests.

Next the king wants Daniel to worship a living dragon (or snake). Daniel kills the dragon with a concoction of fat, pitch and hair proving it was not a living god. The Babylonians demand the king throw Daniel into the lion's den for his destruction of both Bel and this dragon. He is there for 6 days and is miraculously fed by God who has an angel transport the prophet Habakkuk (by his hair) from Palestine carrying stew and bread. On the 7th day Daniel is freed and his accusers are fed to the lions.

Prayer of Azariah & Song of the 3 Hebrew Children

This is an inclusion of a prayer by Azariah, and a psalm sung by he and his two friends in the furnace – all of this supplementing the Biblical account.

Additions to Daniel



Susanna and Elders, 1860 woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Karolsfeld
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1 Esdras *Orthodox* (KJV/NRSV/ESV)

- written in Greek before the first Century BC.

Reorders/rewrites Ezra with parts of 2 Chron. 35-36 and Neh. 7-8

Adds a court tale of “The Contest of the Three Bodyguards”

- One of them is Zerubbabel
- Contest is to determine which is strongest: “wine”, “the king”, or “women.. but above all truth”

May reflect a tradition that wanted to remember Ezra rather than single out Nehemiah as the memorable figure of this era (like Sirach does).

“Then the king said to Zerubbabel, ‘Ask what you wish, even beyond what is written, and we will give it to you, for you have been found to be the wisest. You shall sit next to me and be called my Kinsman.’ Then he said to the king, ‘Remember the vow that you made on the day when you became king, to build Jerusalem and to send back all the vessels that were taken from Jerusalem, which Cyrus set apart when he began to destroy Babylon and vowed to send them back there. You also vowed to build the temple, which the Edomites burned when Judea was laid waste by the Chaldeans.’” (4:42-45)



Orthodox icon of Ezra, source:
<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2015/12/13/603-righteous-hezron>

Prayer of Manasseh

***Orthodox* (KJV/NRSV/ESV)**

- written in

And now I bend the knee of my heart,
implore you for your kindness.

I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned,
and I acknowledge my transgressions.

I earnestly implore you,
forgive me, O Lord, forgive me!

Do not destroy me with my transgressions!

Do not be angry with me forever or store up evil for me;
do not condemn me to the depths of the earth.

For you, O Lord, are the God of those who repent,

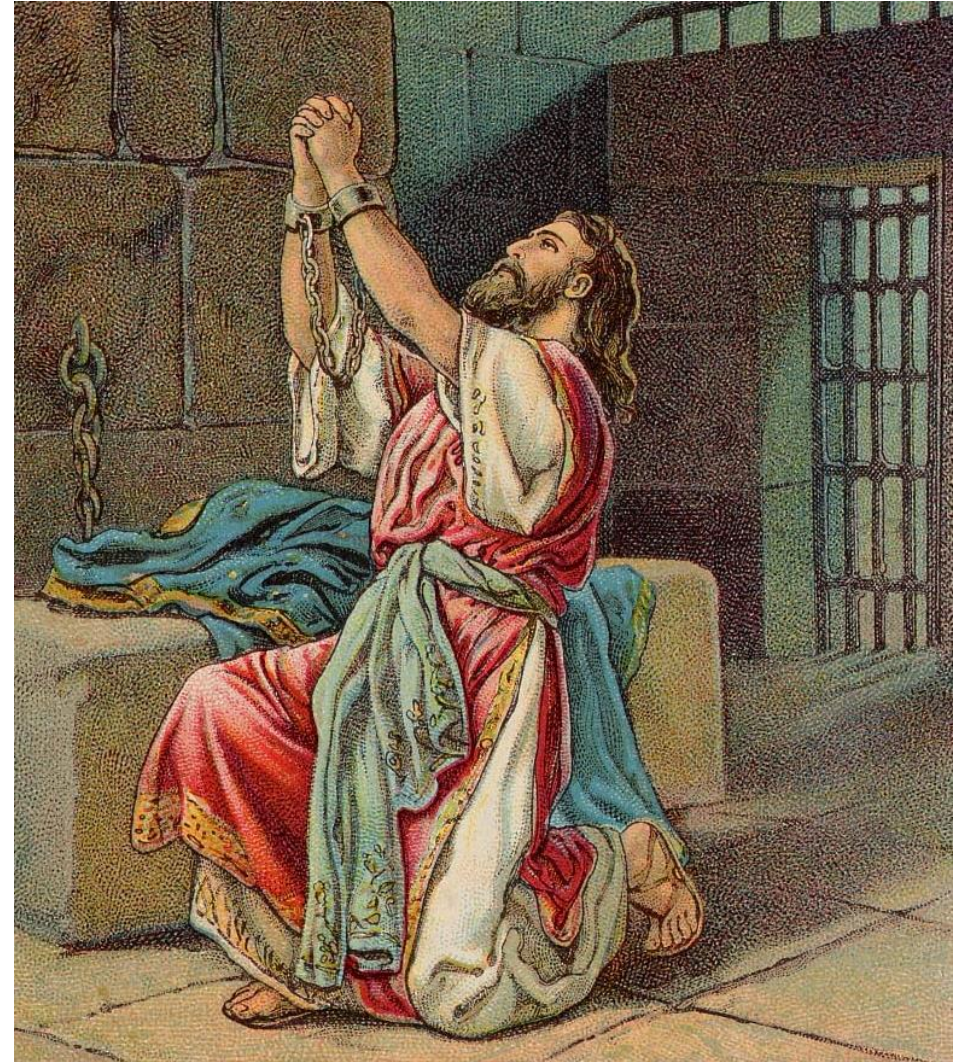
and in me you will manifest your goodness,

for, unworthy as I am, you will save me according to your great mercy,

and I will praise you continually all the days of my life.

For all the host of heaven sings your praise,

and yours is the glory forever. Amen. (vv. 11-15)



Manasseh's repentance, illustration from a Bible card by the Providence Lithograph Co.
Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11967304>

Psalm 151 *Orthodox* (NRSV/ESV)

This psalm is ascribed to David as his own composition (though it is outside the number), after he had fought in single combat with Goliath.

I was small among my brothers
 and the youngest in my father's house;
I tended my father's sheep.

My hands made a harp;
 my fingers fashioned a lyre.

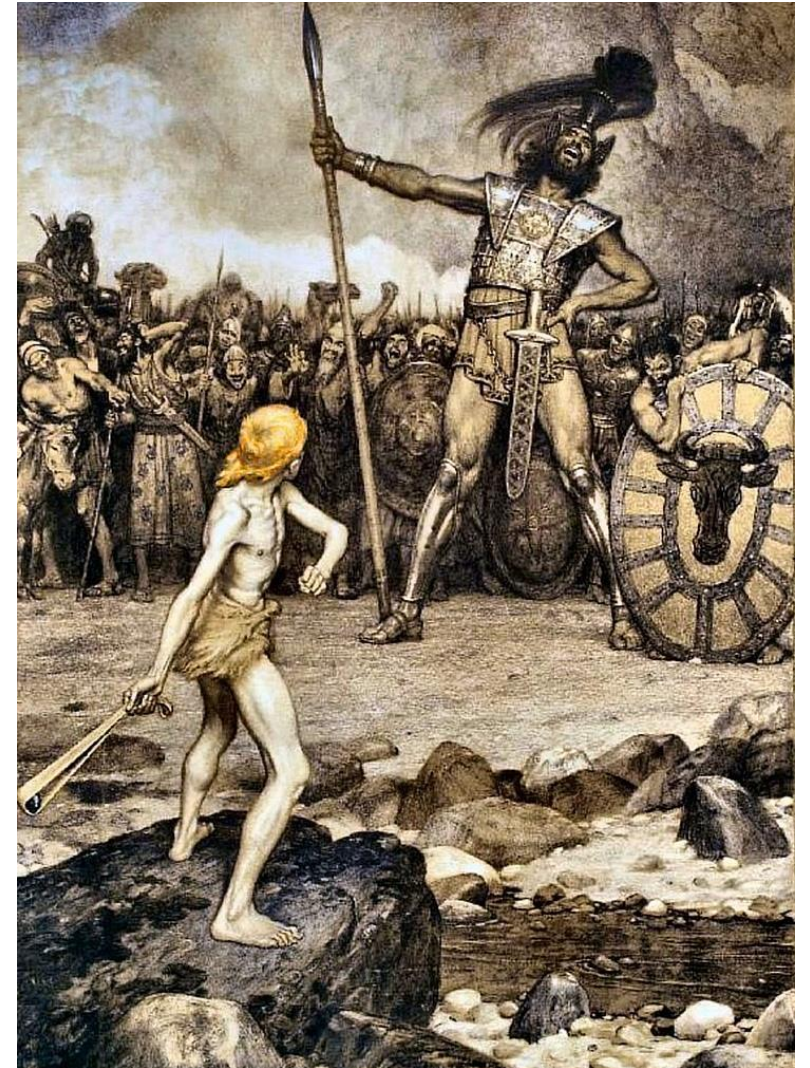
And who will tell my Lord?
 The Lord himself; it is he who hears.

It was he who sent his messenger
 and took me from my father's sheep
 and anointed me with his anointing oil.

My brothers were handsome and tall,
 but the Lord was not pleased with them.

I went out to meet the foreigner,
 and he cursed me by his idols.

But I drew his own sword;
 I beheaded him and removed disgrace from the people of Israel.



David and Goliath, (1888), Lithograph by Osmar Schindler
Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=90627385>

Other books

3 Maccabees *Orthodox* (NRSV/ESV)

- written in Greek in the 1st Century BC in Egypt (a work of the Diaspora Jews living in Alexandria and Egypt)
- A “history” recounting God’s rescue of faithful Jews in Egypt, persecuted by Ptolemy IV Philopator (50 years prior to Antiochus IV)
- Key hero is Eleazar, a faithful aged priest.
- Themes:
 - Highlights Jew vs. Gentile dynamic, and a faith that God will defend his people.

4 Maccabees *Greek Orthodox, appendix* (NRSV/ESV)

- written in Greek in the mid 1st Century AD
- an eloquent defense of the Jewish way of life, that highlights the martyrs under Antiochus IV.
- Themes:
 - idea of substitutionary atonement (*hilasterion* = propitiation), in this case of the martyrs for the people of God

2 Esdras *Russian Orthodox* (KJV/NRSV/ESV)

- written in Greek in the late 1st Century AD
- a Jewish apocalypse (with a beginning and ending added later by Christians)
- Themes:
 - Adam’s fall affecting all of mankind
 - Explicit talk of the Messiah being God’s Son, and of him dying