

How God Delivered and Preserved His Word for Us, Part Five: Ersatz Books of the Bible

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. When considering what books are accepted into the Old Testament canon of scripture, we occasionally hear of writings known as the Apocrypha
 1. Ersatz - “an artificial and inferior substitute or imitation for a genuine article” (Merriam-Webster)
 2. Apocrypha (sometimes called the Intertestamental Books) - “writings or statements of dubious authenticity; books included in the Septuagint and Vulgate but excluded from the Jewish and Protestant canons of the Old Testament; early Christian writings not included in the New Testament” (Ibid)
 3. Origin - “Medieval Latin, from Late Latin, neuter plural of apocryphus secret, not canonical; Greek apokryphos obscure, hidden away” (Ibid)
- B. The Apocrypha consists of 15 books or writings:
 - 1 Esdras (Vulgate 3 Esdras)
 - 2 Esdras (Vulgate 4 Esdras)
 - Tobit
 - Judith
 - Rest of Esther (Vulgate Esther 10:4 – 16:24)
 - Wisdom
 - Ecclesiasticus (also known as Sirach)
 - Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremy
 - Song of the Three Children (Vulgate Daniel 3:24–90)
 - Story of Susanna (Vulgate Daniel 13)
 - The Idol Bel and the Dragon (Vulgate Daniel 14)
 - Prayer of Manasses (follows 2 Chronicles)
 - 1 Maccabees
 - 2 Maccabees
 - Psalm 151 and the Book of Odes
- C. Apocryphal books generally accepted by liturgical Christianity
 1. Ecclesiasticus - written about 180 B.C., contains proverbs and practical observations of life two centuries before the birth of Christ. The work closely resembles the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament. It is a record of early Rabbinical thought.
 2. Wisdom - considered one of the most valuable books of the Apocrypha. It was written by a Jew of the Dispersion about 65 B.C. It is similar to the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament. It was written especially to combat the materialistic tendencies of the book of Ecclesiastes. Sometimes referred to as the Wisdom of Solomon
 3. First Maccabees - written by a Jew in Palestine during the latter part of the 2nd century B.C., is a historical source on the period from 175 to 135 B.C. Represents insight into the root causes of the Maccabean

rebellion and details the rebellion itself down to the death of Simon in 135 B.C. It gives detailed information on Antiochus Epiphanes and his desecration of the Jerusalem Temple, and outlines the origin of the Jewish feast of Hanukkah.

4. Second Maccabees - this work is a combination of history and fiction, and is an abridgment of a longer fictional writing. It was written in the latter part of the 2nd century B.C.
 5. Tobit - a work of fiction very popular among Jews and early Christians. It is a story of romance and legend from the Jewish Dispersion in Egypt. It was written in the 3rd century B.C., and was based on two well-known Egyptian stories. The purpose of this book was to teach moral lessons, and correct some superstitions. It features an angel Raphael.
 6. Bel and the Dragon - written about 100 B.C., story reveals Daniel's wisdom in exposing idolatry and those who promote it. It also promotes the existence of a dragon-god in Babylon.
 7. Judith - is a legendary tale of a Jewish widow reminiscent of Joan of Arc who succeeds in outwitting and slaying a great Assyrian general, thus bringing deliverance to her oppressed people. It was written in Palestine during the 2nd century B.C. by an early Pharisee
 8. The Rest of Esther - written about 100 B.C., consists of a number of additions to the Biblical book of Esther, added for detail and to make up for apparent spiritual deficiencies of the canonical book. It is filled with dragons, and other images that supported later false prophecies regarding the last days.
 9. Baruch - written in the first century A.D. The 6th chapter is known as the Epistle of Jeremias, sometimes considered a separate book
- D. Books not generally accepted by liturgical Christianity
1. The Prayer of Manasses - dates from the first century B.C. It was intended to be used in connection with the story of Manasseh's Babylonian captivity.
 2. The Song of the Three Holy Children - an addition to the Book of Daniel written about 100 B.C. and in the third chapter after the 23rd verse.
 3. The History of Susanna - written in the first century B.C., an addition to the book of Daniel, generally found prefixed to the book. The purpose of the story is to magnify Daniel's powers and the judgment.
 4. First Esdras - an abbreviated Greek version and reconstruction of the Ezra. It was written about 100 B.C. Some of the subject matter added is from the book of Nehemiah.
 5. Second Esdras - is an apocalypse, especially chapters 3-14. It is composite in origin, dating from 65 B.C. to 120 A.D. It focuses on Jewish thought regarding the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
 6. Psalm 151 and the Book of Odes - Psalm 151 is the name given to a short psalm found in most copies of the Septuagint but not in the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible. This Psalm is ascribed to David when he slew Goliath in single combat. Odes is a book found only in Eastern Orthodox Bibles and included after Psalms in some editions of

the Septuagint. The chapters are prayers and songs from the Old and New Testament times. The first nine of them form the basis for the songs sung during Catholic matins and other services.

- E. The Catholic church accepts 12 of the books and calls them “deutero-canonical” books.
 - 1. The books rejected by the Catholic church are I and II Esdras and the Prayer of Manassah, giving the Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible a total of seven extra books plus additions to five canonical books.

II. HOW DID THOSE BOOKS COME TO US?

- A. Some later translations of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) contained some of these books in an appendix. They were considered useful reading, but not inspired.
- B. Augustine influenced the councils of Hippo (393 A.D.) and Carthage (397 A.D.) to accept these extra books. He made sure that any opposition to these books was suppressed. However, these writings continued to hold a secondary position to the rest of the Bible.
- C. The Council of Trent (1546 A.D.), in reaction to the growing Protestant movement, resolved “if anyone receives not as sacred and canonical the said books entire with all their parts, as they have been used to be read in the Catholic Church, let him be anathema!”
- D. The reason for the Catholic’s interest in these books is that some of their unusual beliefs and practices are justified by these writings.
 - 1. 2Maccabees 12:39-45 talks of praying for the dead which leads to the Catholic teaching of purgatory.
 - 2. Ecclesiasticus 3:30 speaks of gaining salvation by almsgiving.
- E. The reason all 15 writings were not included was because some contradicted Catholic teachings
 - 1. 2Esdras 7:105 speaks against praying for the dead.
- F. It should be noted that all of these books only exist in Greek copies; none of them in Hebrew or Aramaic.
 - 1. They were never written down by the inspired writing prophets of the post exile who copied, compiled, and preserved the writings of other inspired Old Testament writers in Hebrew and Aramaic.
 - 2. That they only exist in Greek implies that they were written after Old Testament inspiration ceased.
- G. None of these writings have been accepted by the Jews as inspired.
 - 1. They failed the tests of authenticity and inspiration.
 - a. They were not written by recognized, inspired prophets, who:
 - b. Did not lead the people away from truth - Deut. 13:1-5; his words do not conflict with God’s known teachings
 - c. Made predictions about the future that always came true - Deut. 18:20-22
 - 2. Ecclesiasticus, sometimes called Sirach, written by Jesus, the son of Sirach; nowhere in the book is there a claim of prophecy, such as “The Lord said”

- a. His grandson who copied and wrote the book for him said that his grandfather got it by reading the law and prophets until he became proficient and then wrote the book.
 - b. “So my grandfather Jesus, who had devoted himself especially to the reading of the Law and the Prophets and the other books of our ancestors, and had acquired considerable proficiency in them, was himself also led to write something pertaining to instruction and wisdom, so that by becoming familiar also with his book those who love learning might make even greater progress in living according to the law.”
 - c. This is not a statement of inspiration, but of good reading and helpful instruction.
 - d. Note the claim that the teachings came from Israel and not God and they were based on personal wisdom developed by study.
- 3. Baruch is supposed to have been written by Jeremiah’s secretary, Baruch, yet it contains several errors.
 - a. Baruch is in the wrong place. Baruch 1:1 says he wrote it in Babylon. Jeremiah 43:6-7 says it was written in Egypt
 - b. Conflicts with Ezra and Nehemiah about the return of the temple items. Baruch 1:8 says he brought back the temple vessels. Ezra 5:14-15 says Sheshbazzar the governor was sent by Cyrus to bring them to Jerusalem
- 4. The Letter of Jeremiah: Baruch 6:3 says that Judah will be in captivity for seven generations (210 years); Jeremiah 25:11 says 70 years
- 5. 1 & 2 Maccabees states that there were no prophets in the land, thus voiding its own inspiration - 1Maccabees 4:46, 9:27, 14:41
- 6. Tobit contains many historical and geographical errors; most telling is the claim that Tobit’s was a youth when the ten tribes revolted (B.C. 925) and lived to see the Assyrian conquest (B.C. 725) – a period of 200 years, yet it says Tobit died at the age of 158.
- 7. Judith contains many historical and geographical errors. Judith 1:1 says Nebuchadnezzar was king of the Assyrians and ruled in Nineveh. Daniel says Nebuchadnezzar was the King of Babylon - Dan. 1:1

III. APOCRYPHA AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The New Testament recognizes the Law, Psalms, and writings of the prophets as inspired of God.
 - 1. Jesus refers to the Law and the Prophets on several occasions
 - a. Matt. 26:56; Luke 24:44-45
 - 2. The apostles concurred - 2Peter 1:20-21
 - 3. We don’t who wrote the books of Esther and Chronicles, but they are always listed with the prophets. The authorship of the rest is well known
- B. The New Testament quotes from every book of the Old Testament as inspired scripture, except for Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

1. This does not mean these five books were not inspired, just that it was not necessary to use them in the New Testament
- C. Unlike the books of the Old Testament, none of the apocryphal books are quoted or referred to in the New Testament, and their content often contradicts it
 1. Jesus and the Apostles never quoted from these books, even though they existed in some later Septuagint versions.
 2. These books were never accepted by the Jews as inspired writings
 3. The early church apostolic fathers and writers never referred to these writings as inspired, though they obviously knew of their existence.

IV. THE LATTER WRITINGS OF THE APOSTOLIC OR ANTE-NICAEAN FATHERS

- A. Non-canonical books written after the New Testament was complete are often called the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, Ante-Nicean Fathers, or Early Christian Fathers. They are not inspired scripture.
 1. The Apostolic Fathers were a group of early Christian leaders and authors who lived shortly after the apostles. Polycarp is traditionally seen as a disciple of the apostle John.
 2. Their writings are typically dated between 80 to 180 AD; however, there is no sound evidence that any were written in the first century, and some of them may have been written as late as 250 to 400 AD.
 3. The writings of the Apostolic Fathers are in a number of genres: letters, sermons, apocalyptic prophecy, a biography of a martyr, and a guide to moral and worship practices.
 4. Many of the opinions expounded by the Apostolic Fathers are no longer considered orthodox by contemporary Christianity; yet, it must be understood that these were written by uninspired and, in many cases, erring men.

Conclusion:

- A. We have all of the books of the Old and New Testaments that God wants us to have, read, and follow
 1. They have passed all of the tests of inspired, canonical scripture
 2. God in His wisdom and providence has seen to it that it is available to all men in all places
- B. Any other book or writing is not to be trusted, believed, and followed without risk to one's eternal salvation
 1. Trust what we have - 2Tim. 3:14-17

Approximate date of writing and names of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers: (38 volumes)

120 Didache	130-160 2 nd Clement
140 Gospel of Thomas	130-170 Gospel of Judas
140 Oxyrhynchus Gospel	130-200 Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus
200 Sophia of Jesus Christ	140-150 Epistula Apostolorum
120 Egerton Gospel	140-160 Ptolemy
160 Gospel of Peter	140-160 Isidore
160 Secret Mark	140-170 Fronto
200 Fayyum Fragment	140-170 Infancy Gospel of James
200 Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs	140-170 Infancy Gospel of Thomas
200 Mara Bar Serapion	140-180 Gospel of Truth
120 Epistle of Barnabas	150-160 Martyrdom of Polycarp
140 1 Clement	150-160 Justin Martyr
150 Gospel of the Egyptians	150-180 Excerpts of Theodotus
150 Gospel of the Hebrews	150-180 Heracleon
250 Christian Sibyllines	150-200 Ascension of Isaiah
100-150 Apocalypse of Peter	150-200 Acts of Peter
100-150 Secret Book of James	150-200 Acts of John
100-150 Preaching of Peter	150-200 Acts of Paul
100-160 Gospel of the Ebionites	150-200 Acts of Andrew
100-160 Gospel of the Nazoreans	150-225 Acts of Peter and the Twelve
100-160 Shepherd of Hermas	150-225 Book of Thomas the Contender
100-200 Odes of Solomon	150-250 Fifth and Sixth Books of Esra
101-220 Book of Elchasai	150-300 Authoritative Teaching
105-115 Ignatius of Antioch	150-300 Coptic Apocalypse of Paul
110-140 Polycarp to the Philippians	150-300 Discourse on the Eighth & Ninth
110-140 Papias	150-300 Melchizedek
110-160 Oxyrhynchus 840 Gospel	150-400 Acts of Pilate
110-160 Traditions of Matthias	150-400 Anti-Marcionite Prologues
120-130 Quadratus of Athens	160-170 Tatian's Address to the Greeks
120-130 Apology of Aristides	160-180 Claudius Apollinaris
120-140 Basilides	160-180 Apelles
120-140 Naassene Fragment	160-180 Julius Cassianus
120-160 Valentinus	160-250 Octavius of Minucius Felix
120-180 Apocryphon of John	161-180 Acts of Carpus
120-180 Gospel of Mary	165-175 Melito of Sardis
120-180 Dialogue of the Savior	165-175 Hegesippus
120-180 Gospel of the Savior	165-175 Dionysius of Corinth
120-180 2nd Apocalypse of James	165-175 Lucian of Samosata
120-180 Trimorphic Protennoia	170-175 Diatessaron
130-140 Marcion	170-200 Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony
130-150 Aristo of Pella	170-200 Muratorian Canon
130-160 Epiphanes On Righteousness	170-200 Treatise on the Resurrection
130-160 Ophite Diagrams	

170-220 Letter of Peter to Philip
175-180 Athenagoras of Athens
175-185 Irenaeus of Lyons
175-185 Rhodon
175-185 Theophilus of Caesarea
178 Letter from Vienna and Lyons
180 Passion of the Scillitan Martyrs
180-185 Theophilus of Antioch
180-185 Acts of Apollonius
180-220 Bardesanes
180-220 Kerygmata Petrou
180-230 Hippolytus of Rome
180-250 1st Apocalypse of James
180-250 Gospel of Philip
182-202 Clement of Alexandria
185-195 Maximus of Jerusalem
185-195 Polycrates of Ephesus
189-199 Victor I
190-210 Pantaenus
193 Anonymous Anti-Montanist
193-216 Inscription of Abercius
197-220 Tertullian
200-210 Serapion of Antioch
200-210 Apollonius
200-220 Caius
200-220 Philostratus
200-225 Acts of Thomas
200-250 Didascalia
200-250 Books of Jeu
200-300 Pistis Sophia
200-300 Coptic Apocalypse of Peter
203 Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas