

The Intertestamental Period: Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

Introduction:

1. While the intertestamental period is sometimes called the “400 silent years,” referring to the cessation of inspired writings, there were still many important works of literature that were produced in this time period.
2. We are going to look at some of the important writings known as “Apocrypha” and “Pseudepigrapha.”

I. Apocrypha

A. The Term Means “Hidden Things.”

1. In ancient times the term is applied to books in 2 senses:
 - a) Books that must be excluded from the canon.
 - b) Books that should be read for exhortation but not for doctrine.
2. In Roman Catholicism, these books have been known as “Deuterocanonical” since the First Council of Trent in 1546.
 - a) The Council of Trent was a catholic ecumenical council that met in response to Luther’s Protestant Reformation. It is sometimes called the “counter-reformation.”
 - b) A number of condemnations were leveled against the protestants, and notably, the Catholic Church declared the Apocrypha as “Deuterocanonical.”

B. What are the books of the Apocrypha?

1. The Old Testament Apocryphal Books recognized by the Catholic Church:

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| 1) Tobit | 6) The Letter of Jeremiah |
| 2) Judith | 7) Additions to Esther |
| 3) Wisdom of Solomon | 8) Additions to Daniel |
| 4) Ecclesiasticus | 9) 1 Maccabees |
| 5) Baruch | 10) 2 Maccabees |
2. Additional books accepted by the Greek Orthodox Church

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|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1) Prayer of Manasseh | 4) 3 Maccabees |
| 2) Psalm 151 | 5) 4 Maccabees |
| 3) 1 Esdras | |
3. Slavonic Orthodox Bibles also include: 2 and 3 Esdras

C. Reasons to Refute the OT Apocrypha:

1. Date:

- a) The Cessation of Prophecy — Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1.8.37-41
- b) 1 Maccabees — 4:46; 14:41.

2. Contradiction With Scripture

- a) Historical Contradictions (Judith 1:1; 4:3; 5:19)
- b) Doctrinal Contradictions (2 Maccabees 12:43-45)

3. Subordination to Scripture

- a) Apocrypha often cites OT, and even imitates its style (e.g. Ben Sirah), while never claiming inspiration for itself.
 - b) None of the Apocrypha claim to be inspired. (not true of Pseudepigrapha).
 - (1) (Ecclesiasticus Prologue)
 - (2) There is no “thus says the Lord” in the Apocrypha.
- 4. Never Included in the Hebrew Canon.**
- 5. Catholics and Orthodox traditions Claim “Deuterocanonical” or “Secondary-Canon” Status.**
- a) These are “books for edification, not doctrine.”

II. Pseudepigrapha

A. The Term Means “False Writings.”

- 1. There are hundreds of examples of Pseudepigraphic works.
- 2. These writings are called “False” often because they claim to be written by individuals who certainly did not write them.
- 3. The distinction between “pseudepigrapha” and “Apocrypha” is slightly fuzzy.
- 4. The pseudepigraphic works are universally rejected from that Biblical canon.

B. Genres of Pseudepigraphic Works

1. Apocalyptic Writings

- a) 1 Enoch
 - (1) Perhaps the most famous of all the pseudepigraphic works. It details an apocalyptic vision supposedly given to Enoch.
 - (2) 1 Enoch was a composite work around 1c. BC - 1 c. AD.
 - (3) 1 Enoch is best known because Jude quotes from it.
 - (a) (1 Enoch 1:9; Jude 14-15)

2. Testament Works

- a) The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
 - (1) (Testament of Reuben 5)

3. Legends

- a) Letter of Aristeas.
 - (1) Tells of the legendary origins of the Greek Septuagint.
- b) Life of Adam and Eve
 - (1) (Life of Adam and Eve 13-16)

4. Expansion of Scripture or “Rewritten Bible”

- a) Jubilees
 - (1) A retelling of Genesis. Heavily focused on the years of Jubilee and a solar calendar. Expands and discusses
 - (2) (Jubilees 5:1-2)

5. Psalms and Prayers

- a) Psalms of Solomon
 - (1) A very messianic book. Gives insight into messianic expectations in this time period.
 - (2) (Psalms of Solomon 17:4-6, 21-32)
- b) Prayer of Manasseh

Conclusion:

1. The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are books that do not belong in our Bibles. However, they are not books that do not serve a purpose.
 1. These books give us a glimpse into the mindset of the people living in the intertestamental period.
 2. There is a curiosity and desire for information. A desire for entertaining stories. Anticipation for better days. A pressing desire for greater faithfulness.
 3. The Apocrypha also have had an impact on Christian theology through the ages.
2. These works are perhaps best described as Martin Luther once said, “[The Apocrypha are] books which are not held equal to the sacred Scriptures, and nevertheless are useful and good to read.”