

History and Authenticity of the Bible
Lesson 8
New Testament Languages and the Apocrypha

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All right, a fifth issue related to the New Testament is the matter of languages and class what I want you to know is that there are three issues here. We are going to deal with them, but just understand it. That is why I list them here right now. There's Greek and that is a heavy duty problem. The first issue and the major issue behind the history and authenticity of the New Testament is Greek. Today we have: about 5,500 manuscripts, fragments, sometimes a whole book, sometimes a whole New Testament, but over 5,500! It's a big issue and we are going to take our time with it.

Number two, we have what we call "primary version." A primary version means it was translated directly from Greek. Now all that we are talking about is before printing. That's why English is not listed or German, even though some of them come from the original Greek or Spanish even. We are talking about before printing. That is where our problem lies in manuscript evidence. We had no way to prove the copies except handwriting and that, you know, could be filled with human error. So that's where we've got to deal with it.

Primary N.T. Versions from Greek

- **Syriac** - The Antioch church in Syria is where the disciples were first called Christians
- **Coptic** - The Ethiopian eunuch from Acts 8 can be traced back to the Egyptian or Coptic church
- **Latin** - The Roman Catholic Church dominated for over 1900 years
- **Gothic** - The German, Russian, type languages used in early missionary enterprises

We have four major or primary versions of the New Testament before printing. We have Syriac, you recognize that name, Syria. Antioch in Syria is where the disciples were first called Christians. Syriac.

Coptic, which is primarily in Egypt. The Coptic Church is still in existence today. There are still Coptic Bibles. I have a man who attends my Bible class on Wednesday night, who is Egyptian and he comes with his Coptic Bible and they believe it is very close to the original. Why? Because of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, they trace the whole Coptic Church to the Ethiopian eunuch. And they believe their translation is one of the closest to the original language that there is. So he brings it and follows along with me from his Coptic Bible.

Latin of course dominated—now, there is no other word—*dominated* the church for a thousand years. And of course, the Roman Catholics dominated clearly for 1900 years. And you will see why in a moment when we talk about the Latin versions, how

many there are. Latin was primarily used by the Western Church, whereas Syriac was used by the Eastern Church. The Western Church focuses on Rome. The Eastern Church focuses on Constantinople, which is now called Istanbul.

Now Gothic is a lot like our Teutonic tribe, like Russian, those kinds of languages, Gothic. And it was used, by the way, very, very much in early missionary enterprises. In fact, some of the reasons why the Bible is translated into other languages was for a missionary motive, to put it into the language of the people.

Now, a secondary version—what is secondary? That means it was translated off of another version rather than Greek; for instance, the Vulgate—“vulgate” means common. The common Latin of the people was actually a translation from the old Latin, a primary version from Greek. Persian was translated from the Peshitta, which was Aramaic. And I mentioned that last time. Armenian, Georgian, these are like Gothic languages. Ethiopic was off of the Coptic. And Arabic, of course, became a very important language and often came of Aramaic rather than Hebrew. But all of these translations are secondary. They did not come off of Greek. They came off of other languages.

Now a sixth matter relating to the New Testament is what we call patristic—the patristic quotations of Church Fathers. I prefer as I have mentioned to you before the word leader. I don't like the Catholic idea of Church Fathers, but usually we know what we're talking about and a lot of books are organized that way. You have what you call the pre-Nicene Fathers. Council of Nicaea, in the early A.D. 300s the church leaders were before that time. Post-Nicene would be leaders after that time, of course. Now here is the

problem: these men wrote voluminously. I mean, it isn't just one or two passages. They wrote constantly.

Polycarp, who studied under the apostle John, was a martyr at Smyrna. Smyrna was mentioned in the book of [Revelation 2:8](#). John was the bishop of Smyrna. He was murdered. He was tortured at the stake. But anyway, Polycarp wrote a letter to the Christians across the water at Philippi, a Roman colony, where you remember Paul wrote to the Philippians. When you read Polycarp's letter to the Philippians, it's like reading the book of Philippians. You can hardly tell when he is quoting Paul and when he is giving his remarks. You can hardly tell. And naturally many of these leaders wanted to talk exactly like the apostles would talk. And they quote voluminously from the Bible. So these quotations sometimes, class, especially if they are early Church Fathers (leaders) they verify the text of the passage that is quoted. Is everybody following me? So if somebody says, I've got a tenth-century manuscript here that I think is pretty accurate, but if the same passage is quoted by a man who lived in 200 A.D., and it's different, then I'll have a tendency to question that tenth-century manuscript.

Now what sort of qualifications do we put upon this? I've listed a problem for you, and that is determining the accuracy of the text, because these men quote out of a passage to make a point. We do that today. And so how do I know which part of your remark is the Scripture and which isn't? So that has to be determined. The value of this, of course, is what I have just mentioned. It will fix the time of a certain text type, because if they are quoting the Bible, then you know what text they are quoting from—even though you have to decide which is a quote is and which is their remark. Yet, you will know the period of time that they are quoting from. Also, you will know geographical

locations, because there are different texts being used at different locations. Like whether it is used in Italy, whether it is used in Egypt, whether it is used in Syria and Turkey.

They are different text types. So there are a lot of problems there.

To give you an idea of who these leaders are, I have given you a little category list. This is very general, but it will help you if you ever need to refer to something within that period.

Categories of Patristic Quotations

Apostolic Fathers (up to A.D. 125)

Ante-Nicene Fathers (A.D. 125-325)

Post-Nicene Fathers (A.D. 325-600)

Eastern Fathers (Syriac)

Western Fathers (Greek or Latin)

Apostolic Fathers. Now there is a whole set in the bookstore. I'm not recommending you buy them. But if you're going to become a pastor/teacher, probably at some time it would be good to get it. It is by Lightfoot, who was a great commentator years ago. But Lightfoot has a whole series called *The Apostolic Fathers*. It's five or six volumes and it is absolutely fascinating reading. You're reading letters and books that are back at the New Testament time or shortly thereafter. And it is fascinating and very

helpful. So that goes to about 125 A.D. We think Revelation was written around A.D. 95, so it was approximately the first century. Apostolic Fathers.

The leaders who in addition to guys like Paul who died earlier, probably around A.D. 67-68, we have John who was living clear until the A.D. 90s and could verify anything that was said about who was quoting Jesus and what was being quoted. He was still here. So John's role was extremely important. That is why a man like Polycarp, who studied under John, his writings are very important to us. And by the way, they are very accurate too.

We have the ante-Nicene, meaning *ante*, "pre." Some call this "pre-Nicene"—A.D. 125 to 325. That is when the Council of Nicaea is, A.D. 325. Post-Nicene carries you to about A.D. 600. Then from then on, all church leaders are divided into two categories: Eastern—that is the Syriac traditions, Constantinople and Western—that is Rome. And those manuscripts are primarily Latin, but there are some Greek.

Let's look at one more thing before we study the Apocrypha. We have what is called, in all this manuscript evidence, we have what's called "lectionaries." Now what are lectionaries? They are the same things that you see in hymnbooks today, where they have Scripture readings in the back of the hymnbooks. These are selected portions of Scriptures that were to be read in the churches, like responsive readings. You know Jews, they take the first five books, the Torah, and they outline it for Shabbat readings on the Sabbath, Saturday. They outline it through the year. And by the way, you end it at the Feast of Tabernacles and on the last day the seventh day of that feast is called *Hoshana Rabbah*, "the great hosanna." And that is the day we believe Jesus poured out water and said, "Come unto me and drink," from John 7.

But they finish the Torah reading on the next day, the eighth day of the feast—which was a special day mentioned in Leviticus 23—they call it *Hoshamini Azulid*. And what it is talking about is a day where they come down off of seven days of rejoicing to a seriousness and that day they read the book of Ecclesiastes, which gives them a balance that their life is very vulnerable and you should never stop reading the Bible. The evening is called *Simkhat Torah*, which is a rejoicing over the Law. And what they do there is they have the final reading of the Law, the last chapter of Deuteronomy, and they go back and start in Genesis and just read a few verses in Genesis. Why?—to remind you that you never are finished. So they go back and read the Law again, the next year. By the way, that just happened. We are right at that time. Last night, the *Simkhat Torah*. And they will begin the readings in Genesis this Saturday in all the synagogues of the world. So, it is kind of interesting. That Jewish practice was brought over in the New Testament church.

One of the great speakers and commentary writers and teachers was a man named Chrysostom, in the fourth century. And he wrote what he called *The Lesson for Today*. And you know today in liberal churches they still do this. In fact they send out a little format for pastors telling them what readings they should have in the church. They sometimes have a reading in the Old Testament, a reading in the New for today. And sometimes the people look at it and say, "Oh that's just liturgy." Well, actually it is a very old practice. Churches did it for years. And the goal was to make sure you read through the whole Bible in a year. That's not a bad practice. The bad practice was when the tradition came in and they told you what to preach as well. That got to be bad.

These lectionaries sometimes are just a few verses. But there are lectionaries, manuscripts of these lectionaries, which are three and four chapters. The average length

is about ten verses. And they appear from the sixth century onward even though Chrysostom who lived in the fourth century, he used it. I want you to notice something interesting about a lectionary. Most of them begin with a phrase (practically all of them) and we have about 2,200 of these manuscripts. And they practically all begin with the phrase, "on a certain occasion." Why do they do that? And the answer is they wanted to protect the congregation from thinking that this was the original text. Now in the Bible when a text is being quoted from the Old Testament, what is the phrase that goes with it?—"as it is written" or "this is written," or "these things are written."

Interesting class, that in the Dead Sea scrolls, where you have copies of the Old Testament as well as many other books including apocryphal books, it never uses the phrase "as it is written" unless it is Scripture and it belongs in the Bible. That is very interesting because there is not an apocryphal book among them that ever has "as it is written."

Now in 1958 we had 1,838 of these, both capital and small letter writings. And today there are 2,200 that we know are in existence and that have been cataloged. Now let's get a summary note. Know what these facts are.

Summary of Cataloged Manuscripts

New Testament Greek Manuscripts: over 5,500

- Only 200 of these are complete manuscripts
- 50 contain everything except the gospels
- 1,500 contain all or part of the gospels only

New Testament Latin Manuscripts: over 10,000

- Total number of N.T. manuscripts: over 20,000
- N.T. quotations of church fathers: over 86,000

Out of 5,500 Greek manuscripts on the New Testament, only two hundred of them are complete New Testaments. Kind of shocking, only two hundred! Another fifty contain all but the gospels. And about 1,500 contain all or part of the gospels only. Are you following that?

Manuscript evidence in Latin now numbers around 10,000. And the total number of manuscripts of the New Testament reaches about 20,000. This is before printing. I mean, that is unbelievable. Let me tell you why. The most manuscripts that we know are in existence today is actually Homer's Iliad. And Homer's Iliad has over six hundred copies. Imagine comparing that document of six hundred copies to the New Testament, which has 20,000 known copies! And that's only the ones we have discovered and cataloged. I mean, we are talking about unbelievable evidence that will lead us to whatever is the original text in a way that no other ancient writing before printing can ever claim. So there is a lot more evidence for what is the text of the Bible, a lot more

things to compare and study and many languages of the world, than any other book in ancient history.

So if someone asks you: "Oh you don't know what really was the original Bible." Just say to them, "What books do you know those facts about beside the Bible? Is there any book in history that you believe has an accuracy and an authenticity like the Bible? Can you name one?" No, they cannot name it. Why? Because the whole ancient writing system before printing is all messed up and they don't even have the number of copies to compare, much less the accuracy of them that the Scriptures contain.

So you see we are not panicking here because there are 20,000 manuscripts. How do you know what the original text is? We are going to get to that. We are going to show you. It is a science. It's called "textual criticism." And now today, when you open up a Greek New Testament, you have at the bottom of the page what is called a "critical apparatus." It lists all the variations in all those 20,000 manuscripts. Imagine that. So you can look at it. Go to the front of your Greek New Testament and see what all those symbols mean and you can know exactly what the difference is on every single variation in the Bible. This is a big subject and a difficult one. You better know what you believe.

Well, one of the interesting things is the quotations from the Church writers. Look at that. How many references? Over 86,000 separate references. Do you suppose that would be pretty good evidence for finding out what was the original text? These men are quoting from it; 86,000 of them we have in print. References. This is not a small subject.

Okay, we'll get started in this. Let's talk about the Apocrypha. What does the word "apocrypha" mean, class? Hidden—that's all it means—to hide. The Apocrypha is not all there is to apocryphal writings. Here's where people get confused. For instance,

the Book of Enoch is an apocryphal writing, but it is not in the list of the Apocrypha. But it is an apocryphal writing and so is the Shepherd of Hermes, and the Epistle of Barnabas, which are in Codex Sinaiticus but they are not in the Apocrypha.

So it is important that we know what we are talking about. You say, “Yeah I do, I’m witnessing to my Catholic friends.” Watch out! Your Catholic friends don’t understand this either. There are a lot of things thrown around. The average Catholic grows up in his home with his mother and dad just speaking off the top of their head telling him that the Protestants took parts of the Bible out. And Revelation says you are not supposed to take any of it away. And guys grow up in a Protestant home, if they ever hear about it they say, “Yeah the Catholics they added some books to the Bible.” And so on and on goes the battle.

The word apocrypha means “hidden.” What does that mean? Well, between the historical end of the Hebrew Old Testament until the writing of the New Testament—I’m trying to say it carefully—between the historical end of the Hebrew Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament in Greek, we have what has been referred to for years as four hundred silent years, or we would say “hidden.” That is, we don’t know much about it. It is hidden from our knowledge. There was no revelation from God during that period of time. We do have some history about that time, and guess what? It is in the apocryphal books. How do we know about the breakup of Alexander the Great’s empire into his four generals?—which by the way, it predicted in the book of Daniel. Even though Alexander the Great is not mentioned, it’s obviously him. But the breakup of his empire into four divisions is clearly taught in the book of Daniel. How do we know

what four divisions they are? Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolemy, and Seleucus—how do we know that? Where did we get that information? Out of apocryphal books!

So, in one sweep, we got Protestants acting like, “Oh boy, Apocrypha! You must be a heretic.” Wait a minute! A lot of the history that we have of those four hundred silent years comes out of apocryphal literature. Because it is in the Apocrypha doesn’t mean that it’s not true. You might see that sometime on a test. Because it’s in the Apocrypha does not mean it’s not true. There is a lot in the Apocrypha that we know is not true. Especially in terms of geography, topography, things like that, dates. But there’s plenty that is true. A lot of it is fanciful, mythological-type writing. But a lot of it is talking about historic events.

Do you know in the Old Testament it tells us that Manasseh, who reigned for 55 years, was one of the wickedest kings ever in Israel? Did you know that because of the sins of Manasseh, God would bring judgment to the Babylonian captivity and would not repent of it no matter if the people turned to the Lord or not because the sins of Manasseh were so terrible? Did you know that Manasseh repented at the end of his life, according to the Bible ([2 Chronicles 33:12-13](#), [18](#))? Just a little, small note, we don’t know much about it, but in the Apocrypha there is a prayer of Manasseh about his repentance. We don’t know whether it is true or not, but in that prayer we get information that is also quoted in the Bible.

Now we’ve got another problem. You see a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. When we come to the Apocrypha, do you understand when you are witnessing to a Catholic, they have no reason to doubt that those books aren’t the Bible? No reason at all. They believe the Protestants are the ones—Luther caused all that—and they took them

out of the Bible. The Protestant answer is: "They didn't even make them part of the Bible until the Council of Trent." Not exactly. The Apocrypha was in the King James Bible. That might be a surprise to you. The Apocrypha was on Jerome's Latin Vulgate also. But they were always separate sections. They were not treated as Holy Scriptures. Why were they in there? Because there are facts in them that do relate to biblical history, so they were like our introductions.

For instance, I do not believe that in Charles Ryrie's Study Bible his notes are inspired of God. But they are helpful aren't they? You read them. They are in your Bible. Did you buy an Open Bible? If you've got an Open Bible, are all those notes that are in there—all those introductions and all the books—is that all Scripture? No, it is not, but it is helpful information. That's the same way the Apocrypha was treated. So in talking to Catholics, in witnessing to them, be very careful what you say. We've got to get the information.

I read you a little note out of the Open Bible's introduction which says that the main opposition to the Apocrypha came from the Puritans, and that is true. It was a Puritan-called conference that led to King James' decision to have a new translation of the Bible. And it was brought up by the Puritans to get rid of the Apocrypha; but interestingly, in that Bible all they did was put the Apocrypha in a separate section. It finally wasn't knocked out until a few years later, in a later edition. As the Puritans won the day and said, "Don't put anything in there that we cannot prove is inspired Scripture. It will confuse people." You know, I agree with them. But at the same time, I want to be careful how I attack the Apocrypha. Okay?

First, let's talk about what the Apocrypha is. It is not all the apocryphal books. It's what we know as the books called the Apocrypha. It refers to fifteen of them, although most people say there are fourteen. But the reason you get fifteen is that there's a document called "The Letter of Jeremiah" that if it's put with Baruch (that's a Bible name by the way), you have to read the book of Jeremiah to find out all about that. But if you put it with that, then there are only fourteen. Eleven of these fourteen are considered to be Holy Scripture by the Roman Catholic Church. Just eleven and I've given you a list of them.

The Apocrypha (300 B.C. to A.D. 100)

A collection of ancient Jewish writings

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|---|---|
| 1 <i>The First Book of Esdras*</i> | 9 <i>The Song of the Three Children*</i> |
| 2 <i>The Second Book of Esdras*</i> | 10 <i>The Story of Bell and the Dragon*</i> |
| 3 <i>The Book of Tobit*</i> | 11 <i>The Prayer of Manasseh*</i> |
| 4 <i>The Book of Judith*</i> | 12 <i>The First Book of Maccabees</i> |
| 5 <i>Additions to Book of Esther*</i> | 13 <i>The Second Book of Maccabees</i> |
| 6 <i>The Wisdom of Solomon*</i> | 14 <i>The Book of Baruch /</i> |
| 7 <i>Ecclesiasticus / Wisdom of Sirach*</i> | <i>The Letter of Jeremiah (15)</i> |
| 8 <i>The Story of Susanna*</i> | |

*** Considered Holy Scripture by the Roman Catholic Church**

The first and second Book of Esdras; the Book of Tobit; the Book of Judith; the additions to the Book of Esther (these are all Jewish); The Wisdom of Solomon; Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Sirach.

We have also Baruch; the Time of Jeremiah; Suzanna. We have The Song of the Three Hebrew Children. We have the story of Bell and the Dragon. That one probably isn't going to bless you. We have the Prayer of Manasseh. And we have two books, class, that tell us almost all of the knowledge we have historically after the Babylonian captivity—First and Second Maccabees.

It's those two books that confirm the accuracy of Daniel chapter 11 and show us that that book is truly inspired of God. It is those books that tell us about Hanukkah, which is in the Bible in the Gospel of John ([10:22](#)). Jesus attended it. It was called “The Feast of Dedication.” How interesting! But we don't know anything in the New Testament about Hanukkah. We get that out of the Book of Maccabees, as we learn the whole story of it. Isn't that interesting! And Jesus in His time attended a Hanukkah. Well Hanukkah deals with lighting in the battle that the Maccabean families had against Antiochus Epiphanes. Ever hear of that name in somebody's sermon? Where did you get that name? Do you understand the Book of Maccabees has provided us with tremendous historical matters that we teach when we're going through the book of Daniel and other books? And yet we sit here with a bad attitude towards the Apocrypha. Wait a minute! This is good history. Yeah, it's got some problems in it, but it is good history. No, it's not inspired of God like the other books are, but it is good history. And there are facts in it that are true facts.

You know we have a big related argument even after printing, as to whether what people say is valid or not. Watch out for what people say! There are true facts in other books besides the Bible that are true also. They are not lies. It does not mean that these

books are Scripture, but they are true facts. I'm leading up to something to show you why the Bible quotes from the Apocrypha, so hang on. You didn't know that? It does!

Now there is a tradition in it and we don't know whether it's true or not. It could be just a fable in the battle for Jerusalem to cleanse the temple, because Antiochus Epiphanes had sacrificed a pig on the Jewish altar of the rebuilt temple in Ezra and Nehemiah's time. We are down now to about 167 to 154 B.C. They were having a terrible battle in the temple area. And they were almost finishing it, but they needed more light because soon it was going to be dark. And the tradition is that the lights of the candelabra miraculously were sustained after they had run out of oil and they were able to finish the job. It is a great story and Jews love it.

And so they have today an eight-pronged candlestick that looks like a menorah, a candlestick, only it has eight prongs. That is what you use at Hanukkah. And you have eight days of Hanukkah, because that is how long it lasted. That is the tradition. And so you light these candles. You light one on the first day. Then the next day, you light number one and two. Then the third day you light one, two, and three. By the way, on the first day you give a gift to one another that is very inexpensive. A pencil maybe or a rubber band, and everybody gives you a gift. It is representing the gifts that God has given to us, and we are going to exchange them among each other to remember that all good gifts come from God. Does that sound Jewish? [James 1:17](#), "Every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning."

There are more Jewish things in your Bible than probably you have ever recognized. But here we are, giving gifts. Well each day the gift gets more expensive, so

by the eighth day it is really costly in a Jewish home. But guess what? They lit all those beautiful candelabras in the court of the women, the court of the treasury. The Bible is very clear that is the place ([John 8:12](#)) where Jesus shouted, "I am the Light of the world and he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" ([John 8:12](#)). Are you a little more interested in Hanukkah now? And I tell you if you have never understood that as it relates to Bible information, you need to. Where does all that come from? It comes out of the Apocrypha.

You see, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. We've got to deal with this carefully because the Apocrypha is quoted in the Bible.

Now let's talk about the acceptance by the Church next time, shall we?
Let's pray.

Lord, thank You for Your word, a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path; a word that is forever settled in heaven—a word that is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, instruction in righteousness that the man of God would be equipped, thoroughly so for every good work.

Teach us, Lord, to know our Bibles well; to know what we believe and why. We thank You, in Jesus' name. Amen.