

History and Authenticity of the Bible
Lesson 9
The Apocrypha and the Catholic Church

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So let's have a word of prayer, shall we?

Father how grateful we are for Your wonderful love for us and for the marvel of the Bible itself. Thank You that You have superintended it's preservation. You protected it through the years. You have given us a written revelation of Yourself and all of Your wonderful deeds. And may our hearts continue to desire to know You through Your word. Teach us, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

We are studying the Apocrypha, and no doubt from last week you were so stimulated you went and read through the Apocrypha since last Wednesday. You are now well prepared and very excited. Let's quickly review, class. The Apocrypha is primarily ancient Jewish writings, written between 300 B.C. and A.D. 100, so about four hundred years. They come right up of course to New Testament times. The word Apocrypha means what, class? "Hidden." They were regarded as canonical by the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent, which is a counter-Reformation movement to Martin Luther and the Reformers. The Apocrypha was in the King James Bible. It was a separate section. The Apocrypha was attached to Jerome's Latin Vulgate, a separate section. But it was the Puritans primarily who emphasized that they should not be even included in any edition of the Bible. We talked a little bit about how they are good history.

Let's just walk through this slowly. And we will also comment on the Bible's quotations of the events in the Apocrypha and tell you why and so forth in just a moment. Now the first thing in terms of acceptance by the church, deals with the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint. The Apocrypha is contained in the Septuagint. That surprises a lot of people. But if you were a Roman Catholic, can't you see how you could use a number of these arguments to prove that they (the apocryphal writings) belong? The Septuagint was accepted by Christians in the first century. We know by Paul's quotations from it that it was well used, as well

as Church Fathers who tell us that they did use the Septuagint. Why? They spoke Greek not Hebrew and they had a Greek translation of the Old Testament. There were several Greek translations of the Old Testament. In addition to the Septuagint, you have Aquila's, Theodotion's, Symmachus', and Origen's. All of them were Greek translations of the Old Testament. The primary one used by Christians was the Septuagint. But anyway, it was in use because they spoke Greek.

The Jewish people however, because it was used by the Christians, did not use it. Even if they were Hellenistic Jews, meaning that they spoke Greek, knew Greek culture. We have reference to the Hellenistic Jews in the New Testament, don't we? Like [Acts 6](#), when they appointed seven men to help them on waiting on tables, it was because the Hellenistic Jews, Jewish widows, were neglected in the distribution of food and care because they weren't true Jews, so to speak that is, true Hebrews. So, it is a very interesting discussion as it relates to the Apocrypha because it does appear in the Septuagint and that was used by the New Testament church. However, that very fact troubled early Christian leaders. Because since it was available to them, they read it and it was Jewish writings. But there were some things that don't fit with Scripture. It doesn't match and we will show you why in a moment.

Now, a second fact dealing with the acceptance by the Church was Jerome's Latin Vulgate. Now that comes around fourth century A.D., but at least for a thousand years, if not longer, it was the standard Bible in the then-known Church. Jerome's Latin Vulgate. Rome officially falls politically in A.D. 476. It probably fell internally and morally long before that, but that is when the Visigoths, a barbaric tribe, came in and sacked Rome and burned it to the ground. At that point, the bishop of Rome took the title of the Roman emperors, *Pontifex Maximus*, "supreme pontiff," if you want to know where the pope came from. That title was given to all the titles of the Roman emperors from Octavian, who was Augustus Caesar in your Bible, from him all the way to A.D. 476. All the emperors took the title *Pontifex Maximus*, supreme pontiff. The final change over was under a man named Damasus. Damasus was a monk from the Carmelite

monastery in Haifa, Israel. He became the bishop of the church in Rome and when Rome fell, he literally took everything over. The College of Cardinals among the Roman Catholics is literally the ancient Roman Senate. All of their insignias, their robes, everything—when political Rome fell, religious Rome took over.

By A.D. 800 under Charlemagne, we have the Holy Roman Empire. And do you understand that all during this time Latin is now becoming the dominate language of the Christian world, the western world? And the Latin Vulgate, Vulgate meaning “common” in the language of the people that Jerome translated, was the Bible for way over a thousand years. There are many Catholics who don’t even use the Douay version of the Bible but prefer Jerome’s Latin Vulgate. And in that Latin Vulgate which everybody is using there is the Apocrypha. But the interesting thing is that Jerome himself did not believe that it should be included in the canon of Scripture. So, he made it in a separate section and it does have good history, history that is not found anywhere in the Old Testament. It tells us about those four hundred silent years that we mentioned earlier.

Now in the third case dealing with how the church accepted this Apocrypha, these hidden truths of the Apocrypha, in Luther’s German Bible. Now remember you are talking about the guy who’s breaking away from the Roman Church of 1534. When did Luther put his Ninety-five Theses, attacking the Roman Church tradition, when did he nail them up to the door of the chapel at the University of Wittenberg? He did that in 1517. If you don’t know that, it is a very important date to know. He did it in October, 1517.

Remember last time I told you what book was first printed on the first printing press. And it was the Bible in what language?—German. That was 1450 A.D. So now we are only 84 years from that point and Luther does an edition of German. And of course, that becomes the standard Bible that was used in the Lutheran Church. And in that Bible the Apocrypha was in a separate section at the end of the Old Testament, not at the end of the Bible. So, he correctly analyzed

them as Jewish writings. He puts it at the end of the Old Testament, but he has them all together and not like the Catholic Bible that has it woven in between all the books.

Luther's Major Issues

1. The authority of Scripture over the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church
2. The universal priesthood of all believers over the clergy's exclusive right to interpret Scripture
3. Justification by faith alone, apart from the works of the Law

Now a fourth thing that became pretty dominant at that time—now this is the Reformation, mind you. What were Luther's concerns in the Reformation? There are three major issues of the Reformation and this affects the issue of the Apocrypha. Three things that Luther said were necessitating a split from Rome. One is the authority of the Scriptures over the tradition of the Church—the authority of the Scriptures over the traditions of the church.

At the time of Luther, there was a Roman Catholic gentleman by the name of Johann Tetzel. And Tetzel was selling what we call indulgences. He has the famous saying: "As the coin drops into the chest, a soul flees to its heavenly rest." Bad! Bad! Bad! But he was literally raking in money everywhere, all over the empire by selling these indulgences, which supposedly would get a person out of purgatory. They would be good works done by people who loved their dead relatives and try to get them out of purgatory. And they would get out of purgatory by indulgences. They still do the same thing today. Lighting candles, offering gifts, and of all that.

Okay. Now, Luther condemns this and says there is no Scripture, this is the tradition of the Church and it is a violation of what God teaches. So that was the first issue.

The second issue was called "the universal priesthood of all believers" versus the laity and clergy controversy in the Roman Church where only the priests could rightly interpret the

Bible. Luther said the Bible should be put into the hands of the common people, a universal priesthood of every believer, instead of a select group of priests. He said that there were pastors who had gifts and functions, but that the idea of priests, from the Old Testament economy, was not biblical theology. He said that Peter, in [1 Peter 2](#), calls all believers "priests" who could offer up sacrifices to God. We are all priests and he was correct. But the Roman Church, of course, you cannot have a Roman Church without the priesthood, anymore than you could have the Mormon Church without the Melchizedek priesthood. These are vital issues to them because only they can interpret the Scriptures.

So now you see we have another issue affecting the Bible itself. Under the universal priesthood of believers, everybody has gifts and everybody has a right to read the Bible and not to listen to somebody else. Luther taught that by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, illumination in our lives, any average believer can read the Bible. They cannot read the Bible if they don't speak Latin. Latin was the language of the Church and the common people all over Germany spoke German. So Luther makes an edition of the German Bible that is really in the language of the people. And immediately it just goes like wild fire!

By the way, Luther never founded the Lutheran Church, for all of you who may have a Lutheran background. A lot of people believe that and I can understand why. But that is not true. Luther was an Augustinian monk in the Roman Catholic Church until the day he died. His goal was to reform the Church. People who were followers of Martin Luther are the ones who split. But Luther was always trying to reform the Roman Church from within, even though he was excommunicated by it.

Myles Coverdale in his English Bible, also the Bishop's Bible, as well as the King James Bible of 1611, all placed the Apocrypha in their Bible in a separate section. In other words, they recognized the validity of the historical sections of these books and their mentioning of events that are also in the Bible itself. So, they were all there. So naturally, people, you could imagine their surprise to see it as a separate section, rather than spaced throughout. They wanted to make

sure it wasn't exactly on par with the rest of the Bible, but it is valid history to help us understand.

So they put it in as a section of the Bible, a separate section at the end.

The third issue of the Reformation was justification by faith alone apart from the works of the Law. Justification by faith—and that became the major issue that separated Roman Catholics from Protestants and still today separates us. When I teach the book of Romans, I have often distributed a test on justification, multiple choice, without people knowing. I just ask simple questions about the righteousness of God. I have done it to evangelicals in many, many places. I am not trying to shock you or surprise you, but every time I have given that test, every evangelical church I've ever given it to, proves to be Catholic rather than Protestant—overwhelmingly so!

See, even today we do not understand the Reformation. There were some very serious issues that I wish it was taught more. I wish people understood more what happened at the Reformation. We would not be in such a doctrinal mess as we are today with our narcissistic, attitudes where all we want to know is how to feel better. We have lost why we are justified by faith alone and not by the works of the Law. So it is a very serious issue.

And that began to undermine the Apocrypha. Why?—because the Apocrypha has many, many things that imply a salvation by works. So, you see all of a sudden it becomes contradictory to the majority of what we have in the Bible.

Now the other thing that was against it, why the Christians were divided over this, even among Roman Catholics, was because it was not found in any of the Hebrew translations. The Jews (these are Jewish writings) you would think they would honor it more than those who are not Jews. But they never placed it on the level with Scripture and I think that is quite significant. As a matter of fact, in the writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls, you have many books besides the books of the Bible. You have all the books of the Bible represented by the fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls, except one, Esther.

So you see, even at the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which are dated before Jesus Christ, they knew about these apocryphal writings but did not accept them on the same par as the Hebrew Scriptures. And in none of the Hebrew translations will you ever find the Apocrypha. So that began to cause Christian leaders to question it. "Why in the world are we including it? We have other history books. If it is good history, fine, we'll say so. But it doesn't belong as Scripture."

Now where the battle actually took place, class, and I want you to know this because you'd be amazed at how many Christians don't. And they get all confused about the Apocrypha. And what they normally do is become anti-Catholic, while they're talking to Catholics. Can you not see, class, by what we have said so far, why a Roman Catholic may be quite comfortable with the fact that the Apocrypha belongs in the Bible? They've got a lot of evidence. If you just look at it from their side, they've got a lot of evidence and they do blame the Puritans.

Now, who are the Puritans? "Oh, they are the ones that landed on the Mayflower." Well, that is a group of them, but that isn't the Puritans. I mean, that's not the whole issue. And I am going to try to explain this briefly. If it was a course in church history, we would take more time with it, but that's not our course. So please be patient and kind. I am not going to tell you a whole lot. I'm just going to connect this together for you.

When Martin Luther and the Reformers like John Calvin, Phillip Melanchthon, Ulrich Zwingli, and all these men, when they were really coming out more and more toward the Scripture, preaching the Scripture, putting it in the hands of the common people because of the printing press, everybody was reading the Bible now. They were learning more and more and more. Well, that is the same period of time in which we have the growth of denominationalism. Can't you understand that? There is only one church, the Roman Catholic Church. And now, everybody is seeing the Bible. So, we forget some of that [because] we are so removed. We think Luther was dedicated therefore to the 39 books...no, he questioned some of the other books, whether they belonged. Why? They were coming out of the Roman Catholic Church.

Class, the Roman Catholic Church believes that the church is the fulfillment of all that God said to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Now once you understand that, you see where they are coming from theologically. For instance, their priests are the same as the priests in the Old Testament. Mass to them is the sacrifice of the temple and tabernacle. You understand that? Once you get this into your head, you can begin to understand why the Roman Church is organized like it is and why they feel like they do.

Now, that particular theology [is] that the church and Israel are exactly the same, or to put it more correctly, the Church is the fulfillment of all God said to Israel. Israel, because of their disobedience and idolatry, God rejects them and the new Israel is the church. Okay. Now listen carefully class, I don't know you each individually. I am not trying to attack your religious background or your mom or dad or anything else, because we are just non-denominational. Okay? We see the dangers of them and as they have caused, division. I am not trying to do that to you. I'm trying to explain something as it relates to our Bible. Okay?

Groups like Lutherans, Reformers, reform traditions, covenant, like Presbyterians, Episcopalians, et cetera, have never changed that doctrinal belief. They are still what we call, "amillennial," which is a nice name as it deals with the Millennium for the fact that they don't have the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. Why? Well, they do believe in the thousand years of Revelation, but as a metaphorical term. Because of the verse, "The Day of the Lord is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day" ([2 Peter 3:8](#)). And they relate it to the triumph of the gospel during the church age, at the end of which Christ will return. So the Rapture and the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation are all at the same moment. Okay, in contrast to say that there is a pre-trib Rapture and a post-trib coming to the earth.

The main issue is Israel, and it always has been. That is the issue. Has God set aside the people of Israel or does He have a continuing plan with them? So that causes your prophetic views to change the moment you decide that.

So will you listen to me carefully, class? And I know that this is kind of long, but I don't know how else to do it. All of these denominations from the Roman Church, which was the only church, they were always amillennial. Christ's kingdom is going to be set up on earth; we are going to do it. You see, all those people that you have heard believe in dominion theology who are existing today, word of faith, they believe that we can have a kingdom of God on earth that we Christians can bring in. This was very common in America before World War I. You see, World War I shook up everybody's confidence that we could bring peace on earth. So post-millennialism (which means we are already in the Millennium) that is the growth of the church in the present age. This is the blessing of the kingdom on earth in the Church and there will be no fulfillment on earth with Israel. That causes people to think differently about the Bible, very differently.

Luther was an amillennialist. Now today we have a lot of sharp scholars who are honing and making this thing really sharp and it all sounds good. It isn't a negative term. There are a lot of good Bible teachers that are amillennial. Westminster Seminary is a fine seminary, fundamental, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with lots of good teachers. It is amillennial. And there is a stronger growth in Reformed tradition I find today than we have had for some years. You read books like Rushdoony, who has excellent analysis of events in history and philosophy and religion together, really an academic-type approach. Rushdoony is an amillennialist. You have in the counseling field, Jay Adams, a wonderful, straight-forward biblical counselor, amillennial. You have multitudes of books out there in the Christian book stores that you are not even aware of what their theological position is. You say, "what are you getting at?" I'm glad you asked!

You see, at the time of the Reformation, there weren't a lot of changes, but there were people who were discovering things in the Bible that they had never discovered before. One of them was baptism. Now in the Reformed tradition, baptism is likened unto circumcision. That is the way it is in the Roman Catholic Church also. So why do you baptize babies?—because you

circumcise babies. Circumcision represents the faith of the parents in the Mosaic Covenant. So they circumcise their child. And because [Colossians 2:11-12](#) says, it connects circumcision with baptism in a metaphor, therefore, they believe this is a correct biblical understanding of baptism. So we should baptize babies representing the faith of the parents in the Lord. Now it is a child of the covenant.

Did you know that most of the men that wrote the United States Constitution, our early leaders, were all amillennialists? Interestingly, many of them believed the United States was the new Israel. Think of the cities, especially back East, named Bethlehem, Mount Zion. You know, it is unbelievable, the Bible names that are all over the East Coast. It was a theological position of theirs and they felt the Jews had been rejected. They are no longer a part of God's program and we are the new Israel.

Now among these people in the Reformers, some read their Bibles and could not prove the baptism of babies. They were called Anabaptists. There were all kinds of them. Even Moravians, Brethren, all kinds of them. They were not just Baptists. The Anabaptist movement, basically is against the teaching that we should baptize babies. They believed in believer's baptism. Did you know that most of them were killed because of this? That is how serious it was. They believed they were heretics in denying what God taught. When in reality, you and I would say today, "No, they were right-on." We believe today, in what is called "believer's baptism."—"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest..." That baptism is a public testimony, an act, an apologetical response to God, says [1 Peter 3:21](#),

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (KJV)

And it's evidence that we have come to know the Lord and a public testimony of that fact. Well, how does that relate to the Apocrypha?

Well, the interesting thing is these Anabaptists began to grow. They began to look at the Bible more and more and more. And some of the teachings of the Roman Church that had carried over into Reformed thinking are perpetuated by Apocryphal books. So some of the Puritans—which are not necessarily all Presbyterians and Reformed people, there were some Baptists that were Puritans. Charles Haddon Spurgeon believed he was a Puritan and he was a Baptist, but you have all of these people coming out of the Reformation. They are coming out of that with a tremendous desire to get back to the Bible. And there are all kinds of people, especially around 1700, some two hundred years after the Reformation. We've got unbelievable proliferation. People are hearing about America and the New World. There is freedom of religion there! They are coming in droves. It wasn't just in 1620, the Mayflower Compact. They were coming in droves. And by the time of the American Revolution, everybody's main concern in this country was freedom of religion.

What is the first amendment of the Constitution? It's freedom of religion. Isn't that interesting? It is the very first one on their list, which shows you what was really going on in America. And through the work of John Wesley, George Whitefield, and many others, we had a spiritual awakening also at the same time. People were turning to the Lord right and left. And America was really born out of a spiritual and moral awakening. I think we need another one, by the way.

So, I'm trying to lay out some history. All during this Puritan era, these strong Bible-teaching men, maybe they didn't know much about prophecy, but they are seeing there is a lot wrong with what's being taught. And the King James Bible, now in English from 1611, a hundred years later has caused a tremendous foment. People have the Bible in their own language. They're reading this thing and they're saying, "Wait a minute!" In the providence of God, isn't it interesting that this is the heart of the great worldwide missionary enterprise of the 1700s and

1800s. Can you see why? They were all going out to proselytize and get people to their way of thinking. So all over the world, and in the process they are bringing them to Christ too, and that's between 1700 and 1900, all the way up to 1929-30, in that bracket, is what we call the "Great Missionary Movement."

That's just millions coming to Christ. You can go to African, South American, Asian, isolated places today and find a Baptist Church, a Presbyterian Church, you know. It's amazing! They just continue to foster their denominational beliefs. And there are people that still today are a part of that. You've got people in America that will not go to another church except their denominational church. Why? Because it's been rooted in them for generations that they are correct and everybody else is wrong. If you don't dot your i's and cross your t's like we say, then maybe you are not in the true body of Christ. See, that has happened throughout history.

Well, all of these Puritan leaders, these guys wrote all the great books that you and I love to get. Still some of the best books on the Bible were written between 1700 and 1900. Not in this century! If you think this is deep, you ought to go back where they didn't have faxes and telephones and television sets. That is when they had time to really study. So you understand that all these guys are really growing in their knowledge of the word. Well, what are they seeing? They are seeing that all these traditions of the Roman Church that they are fighting to break away from, guess where they are perpetuated? In the Apocrypha!

So you see it was the Puritans all the way from the beginning who insisted, "Get that out of there!" They forced one edition within eighteen years from the original one, 1611. By 1629 the Puritans got the King James publishing houses to drop the Apocrypha out of the Bible. Some editions were still putting it in for a while, but you can understand, this became like a snowball. And they are saying, "The true Bible, the inspired word of God, is not the Apocrypha." So no matter who tells you what, if you are in that view, our thanks is to the Puritans who were learning God's word, growing in their understanding of things, and pulling out of the Roman tradition, which basically blinded the people. They never had the opportunity to look at their own Bible for

over a thousand years. Now they see it and now they are saying, "Wait, this is not right. What is in the Apocrypha contradicts what is in the Scripture."

Was it good history? Yes. But what is wrong with it? Why did they reject the Apocrypha? They said it is not canonical for seven reasons.

Confession has been a problem for years. In the priestly Chaldean system they had confession of sins to a priest. There are passages that they can use to apply that. Roman Catholics use [1 John 1:9](#), "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The question is: if you confess it, you have to say it to somebody, so who do you say it to? We say, "to God." But Catholics say, "No, the priest is representing the authority of God; you should say it to him. He's the only one who can absolve you." How do they get that he can absolve your sins?—from what Jesus said to Peter, who they believe is the first pope! See how all of this is tied together. He says, "to whomever you remit their sins, it shall be remitted" ([John 20:23](#)).

I can stand on this other side for a while and debate their cause and I see why we need to have kind of a gentleness, a kindness to Roman Catholics. We always think that they have no scriptural reasons for their beliefs. That's not true. They have a lot of reasons for their beliefs.

Yes?

Another voice: You said there was a literal fulfillment of the Millennium that the Catholics believed?

The Catholics do not believe in a literal Millennium, no sir. They believe that the Millennium, like many in the Reformed traditions do, is the triumph of the gospel seen in people coming into the membership of the Church in this present age, which will end with the coming of Christ. That is why we call them post-millennial. But even in the thousand years, it is not a specific thousand years. It is a general term in their view. It could go on for years after that, which it obviously has in their view.

The Catholic Church views the book of Hebrews as totally different. The book is written to whom?—Hebrews or Jews. The Catholic's primary view—they've said for years that the Jews crucified Jesus. They have held them personally and corporately responsible. That has been the Catholic view throughout history. So, their view of the book of Hebrews, you understand, is tainted.

When you ask a Roman Catholic priest, "Have you ever taught the book of Hebrews?" I mean, he never has. I taught the book of Hebrews at the request of a Roman Catholic group from Bologna, Italy. But that priest was fighting me all the way, every day. He'd stand up and try to correct it—of course he spoke Italian. And I would have to have somebody translate and they'd tell me, "He does not like you!" But out of fifty-five people we had there for that retreat, on the final night, forty-one of the fifty-five prayed to receive Christ. And Carol (my wife) and I individually dealt with them all. A university student from Bologna stood up on the final night and in broken English he said, "I don't care what we teach, I want Jesus now!" That started it. Others said, "I do too. I do too." And the priest was up there trying to stop them and put them back down. You can't stop the work of the Holy Spirit.

Today you and I both know if you say somebody is puritanical it's a negative, isn't it? He is a Pharisee, self-righteous, holier than thou. And they completely missed the point. The Puritans, who did believe of course in a godly lifestyle (like all good men have through the history of the Church) are pure in doctrine. Pure in their commitment to the Scripture, you see. We have missed that. These men were followers of God's word and that is why they had questions about the Apocrypha, which leads me beautifully into this transition for our next session.