

BC 6 – Difference Between the Canonical and Apocryphal Books

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You have already learned what the Canonical books are. They are the 66 books of the Bible – 39 of the Old Testament and 27 of the New Testament. You've already heard that some people, as Roman Catholics, (and a few others) believe the apocryphal books should be included in the Bible. Are they right, or are they wrong? This is what you will see today.

Our headings are:

Identity of the Apocryphal Books

Benefits of the Apocryphal Books

Danger of the Apocryphal Books

Our goals are: That **you gain an understanding of the dangers of these and other false revelations that are included or used alongside the Bible**, and that you learn to **hold on to the completed revelation of God so you can love God and live for his glory**.

Let's read together:

We distinguish those sacred books from the apocryphal, viz: the third and fourth books of Esdras, the books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Jesus Sirach, Baruch, the Appendix to the book of Esther, the Song of the Three Children in the Furnace, the History of Susannah, of Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manasseh, and the two books of the Maccabees. All of which **the Church may read and take instruction from**, so far as they agree with the canonical books; but they are far from having such power and efficacy that we may from their testimony confirm any point of faith or of the Christian religion; much less may they be **used to detract from the authority of the other, that is, the sacred books**.

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1. The Apocryphal Books were written between 400BC and the time of the coming of Christ (the inter-testamental time).

2. Which books make up the more common Apocryphal books?

The more common apocryphal books are the third and fourth books of Esdras, the books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Jesus Sirach, Baruch, the Appendix to the book of Esther, the Song of the Three Children in the Furnace, the History of Susannah, of Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manasseh, and the two books of the Maccabees. These are not all, however.

There are at least 63 apocryphal books. These books were written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. They were all translated into Greek.

3. Apocrypha means “that which was hidden.”

The Jews realized that some books were inferior to the Word of God and as was their custom, they hid them. They believed it was wrong to destroy any religious books. **Hiding them was therefore an acceptable act.** The early Christians used the word “apocrypha” in much the same way as the Jews - putting away books that were obviously inferior to the rest of the Bible.

4. Why are the Apocryphal books included in the Roman Catholic Bible?

The Old Testament, which was translated in Greek, was called the Septuagint. For some unknown reason, some men included the apocryphal books in the Septuagint. Since these books were attached to the Bible, probably for convenience, over time people simply assumed the apocryphal books were part of the Bible. But...

These books were never included in the Hebrew Bible – the Old Testament.

These books and were never accepted by the Jews.

These books were never used in worship. But because some Christians did not read Hebrew, only Greek, they could not tell which books were in the Hebrew Bible.

These books were first inserted in the Bible by Jerome (AD347-420), but even Jerome said the apocryphal books were not canonical.

Benefits of the Apocryphal Books

All of which **the Church may read and take instruction** from, **so far as they agree with the canonical books;**

1. You can learn history from the apocryphal books to some extent.

They give names of places, peoples, and events, though they are not always reliable. But they can surely be used to corroborate historical facts.

2. You can learn and confirm many teachings of Jewish life and culture in the Apocryphal books.

You can learn of activities in the 2nd temple and details of the diaspora (the dispersion of the Jews around the world), **and what life was like after the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity.**

You can learn of the tensions between Jews and non-Jews during this time, especially with the Medo-Persians and Greeks.

You can learn how Jesus never abandoned his church, even in the darkest days. There were some glorious victories for God’s people and some striking judgment on those who rejected the Lord.

3. You can learn and confirm many doctrinal teachings of the rest of the Bible.

This was why Martin Luther, the great Reformer, described the Apocrypha as “good and useful.” And **The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion**, a Reformed Anglican system of

doctrines, confirmed that the Apocrypha should be “read for example of life and instruction of manners.” And **John Calvin, John Wesley, and Ulrich Zwingli** also supported translating and reading these writings. **Even foundations for many of our doctrines today**, including the Trinity, were suggested in the Apocrypha.

You can learn how the Jews interpreted Old Testament writings.

4. Where the Apocrypha disagrees with any of Scriptures, and sometimes they do, you must necessarily reject them.

Danger of the Apocryphal Books

but they are **far from having such power and efficacy** that we may from their testimony confirm any point of **faith or of the Christian religion**; much less may they be used to **detract from the authority of the other, that is, the sacred books.**

1. In AD 397 the church officially recognized the 66 books (including the 27 books of the New Testament) of the Bible and received them.

The Apocryphal books did not meet the established conditions for inclusion in the canon. Were those standard? (The first 39 Books, the Old Testament, were already confirmed as God’s Word by Jesus.)

- a. That the book **was preserved by God.**
- b. That the book had to have been **written by an Apostle or his close associate.**
- c. That the book was already **widely used in the churches.**

The Apocryphal books failed the test of reception by the church and were rejected by the church. They were not written by an Apostle or his close associate. They were never widely used in the churches.

3. Further, the Apocryphal books lack the power to transform lives, they lack the majesty of the Bible, and they contain many errors.

Consider some examples.

The **heretical doctrine of purgatory**, held by the Roman Catholic Church, came out of the Apocrypha.

The Apocrypha **treats women with contempt.**

The Apocrypha **accepts good works as enough for salvation.**

Tobit 4:11, "For alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness."

The Apocrypha **supports witchcraft** and tells ridiculous stories of magic.

The Apocrypha **claims that Nebuchadnezzar was a king who lived in Nineveh**, but Nineveh was already destroyed years before Nebuchadnezzar's rule. Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon. So it is inaccurate.

Judith 1:5, "Now in the twelfth year of his reign, Nabuchodonosor, king of the Assyrians, who reigned in Nineveh the great city, fought against Arphaxad and overcame him."

The Apocrypha **claimed erroneously the time the Jews would be in Babylon**. The Jews were there for just less than 70 years.

Baruch 6:2, "And when you are come into Babylon, you shall be there many years, and for a long time, **even to seven generations**: and after that I will bring you away from thence with peace."

Keep in mind the Roman Catholic Church claims that these writings were inspired though they are provably in serious error. This is another reason to reject Roman Catholicism.

If the authoritative document cannot be trusted, how can you rely on it?

3. The Apocrypha never claimed to be of Divine inspiration.

There is no reference to the Apocrypha in the New Testament.

In a couple of places it seems to suggest that it is not of Divine origin.

4. The Apocrypha never speaks of the Messiah – Jesus Christ – as the rest of the Old Testament.

Matthew 23:34 "Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, 35 "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, **from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah**, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Every book of the Old Testament pointed to Christ.

This is how you must evaluate religious books today: **Do they recognize Jesus as the God-man who is the only Messiah from God?** You will find that all those who introduce books alongside of the Bible (Mormons, Muslims, etc.) do not see Jesus this way. You must therefore reject them.

5. Jesus declared what the Old Testament books were and they did not include the Apocrypha.

And so you must reject them as authoritative. They will mislead you.

Luke 24:44 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

It is true there is some similarity between a few verses in Jude (concerning the burial of Moses) and one of the lesser known apocryphal books, but it is not a quote, and probably was common knowledge at that time (so the Jews weren't relying on an apocryphal book) of how Moses was buried.

Because of all of the differences, you must reject the Apocrypha.

Conclusion:

Apocryphal books were ignorantly added to the Roman Catholic Bible. Christians who know better, are to benefit from the apocryphal books, but they ought not to accept them as equal to the Bible.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. How many of the apocryphal books have you read? You should read them.

2. Learn from the apocryphal books. Learn facts of history, culture, and traditions recorded in the apocryphal books. Learn of Jewish sociology during the inter-testamental period. Learn theology. Learn some of the conversations in the New Testament better. Don't be afraid of the Apocrypha, but use them wisely.

3. Keep in mind, however, the Bible 66 books alone are our standard of faith and practice; all other books have no authority in matters of faith and practice.

4. This means you don't need new revelation from God. The Bible is a closed system. Reject all other religious books as authoritative, regardless of how many millions of people follow them!

5. Thank God for the Bible. There is no uncertainty about what you must believe and how you must live. It has no errors. Most of all, it teaches you how to be saved from your sins through the suffering and death of Jesus on the painful and shameful cross. No other book could teach this!

If you are not a Christian, there are consequences for not following this Divine revelation. I urge you to pick up a Bible (ask us for one if you need one) and learn. Read it. Learn how to be saved from your sins.