

Dr. David deSilva, Apocrypha: Witness Between the Testament, Session 1, General Introduction Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 1, General Introduction, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. deSilva's lecture offers a general introduction to the Apocrypha, emphasizing its significance for both historical and theological understanding. The lecture aims to encourage Protestant Christians to overcome prejudices against these texts, which are a selection of Jewish writings from the intertestamental period. **DeSilva highlights that the Apocrypha provides insights into the development of Jewish thought and practice during a crucial era, offering valuable context for interpreting the New Testament.** He discusses various genres found within the Apocrypha, including historical narratives, wisdom literature, and inspirational fiction. **The lecture concludes by arguing that studying the Apocrypha enriches Christian faith by illuminating the roots of early Christian theology, ethics, and liturgical practices.** It emphasizes that these texts can offer ethical and devotional guidance if read with discernment.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 1 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → NT Introduction → Apocrypha).



**deSilva_Apocrypha_
Session01.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 1, General Introduction

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from Dr. David deSilva's lecture on the Apocrypha, focusing on key points and incorporating direct quotes.

Briefing Document: Dr. David deSilva, Apocrypha, Lecture 1, General Introduction

Subject: Introduction to the Apocrypha: Value, Origins, Content, and Significance for Christians.

Overview: This lecture serves as an introduction to the Apocrypha, addressing Protestant prejudices, defining the collection, outlining its contents, and arguing for its value in understanding intertestamental Judaism and the New Testament. DeSilva encourages a thoughtful and discerning approach to reading the Apocrypha, highlighting its historical, theological, ethical, and devotional value.

Main Themes & Key Ideas:

1. Defining the Apocrypha and Addressing Protestant Prejudice:

- The Apocrypha consists of Jewish texts written between 400 BC and the first century AD, a sampling of a much larger body of Jewish literature from this period. DeSilva states, "the books that make up the Apocrypha, are just a small sampling of Jewish literature written in the time, so to speak, between the Testaments, between about 400 BC and into the first century AD."
- From a Protestant viewpoint, the Apocrypha are those books included in the Old Testament of Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions but excluded by Protestants. Catholics and Orthodox Christians refer to them as "deuterocanonical" books, a term not implying inferiority but later acceptance into the canon.
- DeSilva directly addresses Protestant hesitancy, stating, "Protestant Christians especially have to overcome a fair amount of prejudice to look into the Apocrypha and begin to see what is in there." He challenges the notion that these books were rightfully "thrown out" due to lack of value or potential for corruption.
- He points out that even Protestant reformers like Martin Luther (who translated them into German, considering them "useful and good to read") and figures in

the English and Swiss reformations regarded these books as valuable for "example of life and instruction of manners" (Anglican 39 Articles) or containing "much that is true and useful" (Zwingli and Calvin).

1. **Origins and Composition:**

- The books of the Apocrypha are Jewish texts originating from both Judah/Judea and diaspora Jewish centers (e.g., Alexandria, Syria, Cilicia).
- They were written in Hebrew or Greek, representing a diverse range of Jewish voices across the Jewish world during the period between 300/250 BC and 100 AD.
- The collection exists as "the Apocrypha" due to Christian reading practices over the centuries, with ongoing debates about their inclusion in the canon.

1. **Contents and Genres:**

- The Apocrypha includes a variety of genres:
- **Expansions and Retellings of Biblical Stories:** E.g., 1 Esdras (another version of material in 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah), a different (longer, more overtly religious) version of Esther.
- **Expanded Versions of Canonical Books:** E.g., a "fatter version of Daniel" with additional stories (Susanna, Bel and the Dragon) and liturgical poems added to Daniel 3.
- **Inspired Texts:** E.g., Prayer of Manasseh, Psalm 151.
- **Historical Books:** 1 and 2 Maccabees, "easily our most important witnesses to the tumultuous and epic making events of 175 through 141 BC in Judea." They explore Jewish identity in the face of Hellenistic influence.
- **Wisdom/Instructional Books:** Wisdom of Ben Sira (Sirach/Ecclesiasticus, resembles Proverbs but more developed), Wisdom of Solomon (Diaspora-based wisdom).
- **Other:** Baruch (penitential liturgy, wisdom poem, prophecy), Letter of Jeremiah (anti-idolatry), a philosophical treatise, inspirational fiction (Tobit, Judith, 3 Maccabees), and one apocalypse (2 Esdras).

1. Value and Significance for Christians:

- **Understanding Intertestamental Judaism:** The Apocrypha provides "valuable windows into intertestamental Judaism," crucial for understanding the New Testament. DeSilva argues that understanding this period is like understanding church history post-Reformation.
- **Insights into Theological Development:** Offers insights into the development of theology, law, and covenant. "It's really quite amazing to see how the theology of the covenant, already articulated in the Old Testament, is adapted, maintained, and, in the face of certain experiences, shored up so that the theology of the covenant could continue."
- **Understanding Jew-Gentile Relations:** Provides a view into Jewish-Gentile relations in the first century.
- **Social Practices and Cultural Context:** Offers insights into social practices, cultural contexts, and everyday life of Jews during this period.
- **Piety and Religious Practice:** Gives an "insider's view" of Torah observance and Temple sacrifices, enriching understanding of the New Testament context.
- **Background for the Teaching of Jesus and New Testament Writers:** Even without direct quotes, there are "a lot of resonances" between the Apocrypha and the New Testament.
- **Influence on Early Christian Theology and Practice:** The Apocrypha played a "large role, a significant role, in the development of early Christology or the development of the doctrine of the Trinity." It also influenced apologetics, responses to martyrdom, and early Christian liturgy.
- **Ethical and Devotional Literature:** The Apocrypha offers valuable ethical and devotional literature, addressing themes like living with eternity in view, taming impulses, and nurturing virtues. DeSilva suggests that "Christians of any kind have good reason to delve into the Apocrypha, not fearing what we'll find there but reading it simply with the same judicious discernment that we would apply to anything we read outside of our scriptural canon."

Conclusion:

DeSilva's lecture presents a compelling case for Protestant Christians to engage with the Apocrypha. He argues that by overcoming pre-conceived notions and approaching these texts with discernment, readers can gain a richer understanding of the historical, theological, and cultural context of both intertestamental Judaism and the New Testament. He emphasizes the enriching potential for historical understanding, ethical growth, and devotional practice.

4. Study Guide: deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 1, General Introduction

Unveiling the Apocrypha: A Study Guide

I. Key Concepts and Themes

- **Definition of Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical Books:** Understand the difference in terminology and how Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox traditions view these texts.
- **Historical Context:** Grasp the time period in which these books were written (roughly 300 BC - 100 AD) and the political/social landscape of Second Temple Judaism.
- **Jewish Literature Context:** Recognize that the Apocrypha represents only a portion of Jewish literature from the intertestamental period, alongside Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, and writings by Josephus and Philo.
- **Literary Genres:** Identify the diverse genres represented in the Apocrypha, such as historical narratives, wisdom literature, expansions of biblical stories, inspirational fiction, and apocalyptic literature.
- **Christian Reading Practices:** Appreciate the historical role of the Church in singling out these texts and the varied opinions on their value among Christian traditions.
- **Reformers' Views:** Understand the nuanced stances of figures like Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin, who acknowledged the value of these texts while maintaining their distinction from canonical scripture.
- **Intertestamental Judaism:** Recognize the Apocrypha as a window into the history, theology, social practices, and religious life of Jews during the Second Temple period.
- **New Testament Context:** Appreciate the Apocrypha as a key to understanding the cultural, religious, and ethical context in which the New Testament was written, the teachings of Jesus, and the development of early Christian theology.
- **Martyrdom:** Identify the importance of Apocrypha books like 2 and 4 Maccabees as a source of inspiration for Christians facing persecution.

- **Ethical and Devotional Value:** Recognize the Apocrypha as a resource for ethical guidance, devotional practices, and insights into living a life oriented towards eternity.

II. Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the etymological meaning of the word "Apocrypha," and how does this relate to the Protestant view of these texts?
2. Explain the significance of the term "deuterocanonical" as used by Catholics and Orthodox Christians.
3. What was Martin Luther's position on the Apocrypha, and how did his actions reflect this position?
4. Identify three geographical locations where books of the Apocrypha are believed to have originated.
5. Name two historical books found in the Apocrypha and explain their importance to Jewish history.
6. Briefly describe the literary genre and content of the Wisdom of Ben Sira (Sirach/Ecclesiasticus).
7. In what way is the book of Judith representative of "inspirational fiction" and what is the message of the book?
8. What themes are addressed in the book of 2 Esdras?
9. Explain how studying the Apocrypha can aid in understanding the context of the New Testament.
10. Give two examples of how texts from the Apocrypha played a significant role in the development of early Christian Theology.

Quiz Answer Key

1. "Apocrypha" comes from a Greek word meaning "hidden things." This reflects the Protestant view that these texts are not as openly accessible or authoritative as canonical scripture.
2. "Deuterocanonical" means "second canon" and is used by Catholics and Orthodox Christians to refer to books that emerged after the books agreed upon by Jews,

Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox as part of the Old Testament, not implying inferiority.

3. Martin Luther considered the Apocrypha to be "useful and good to read." He translated these books and included them in his German Bible, placing them between the Old and New Testaments.
4. Books of the Apocrypha originated from Judah/Judea, Alexandria (Egypt), and Syria/Cilicia (modern-day Turkey and Syria).
5. 1 and 2 Maccabees provide essential accounts of the Maccabean revolt and the struggle for Jewish identity in the 2nd century BC, detailing a period when Israel regained independence.
6. The Wisdom of Ben Sira, is a wisdom book similar to Proverbs containing blocks of instruction.
7. Judith is an inspirational fiction book because of its historical errors, but it portrays a woman who delivers her village and conveys the message that God will use any vehicle to vindicate his honor.
8. 2 Esdras wrestles with questions of God's justice in the face of Israel's suffering and explores the meaning of Torah observance after the destruction of Jerusalem.
9. Studying the Apocrypha provides insight into the historical, religious, and cultural context of intertestamental Judaism, which informs the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament writers.
10. Stories of Jewish martyrdom, mainly in 2 and 4 Maccabees, helped inspire Christians facing persecution, and Christians facing the idol worship of non-Christian Gentiles turned to the anti-idolatry polemic that one finds in Letter of Jeremiah and Wisdom of Solomon.

III. Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the Apocrypha in bridging the gap between the Old and New Testaments, focusing on how these texts illuminate developments in Jewish theology and practice during the intertestamental period.
2. Analyze the varied reception of the Apocrypha among different Christian traditions (Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox), explaining the theological and historical factors that contribute to these diverse perspectives.
3. Examine the influence of the Apocrypha on the development of early Christian theology, particularly in areas such as Christology, apologetics, and liturgical practices.
4. Explore the literary diversity of the Apocrypha, providing specific examples of different genres and discussing how each contributes to our understanding of Second Temple Judaism.
5. Evaluate the ethical and devotional value of the Apocrypha for contemporary Christians, considering the practical wisdom, moral guidance, and spiritual insights offered by these texts.

IV. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apocrypha:** From the Greek meaning "hidden things"; term used by Protestants to refer to books included in the Old Testament canon of Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians but not in the Protestant Old Testament.
- **Deuterocanonical:** Term used by Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians to refer to the same books Protestants call the Apocrypha; meaning "second canon," implying a later addition to the canon, but not necessarily inferior.
- **Pseudepigrapha:** A collection of Jewish writings from the Second Temple period that are not included in the Apocrypha or the Old Testament.
- **Second Temple Judaism:** The period of Jewish history between the rebuilding of the Second Temple in Jerusalem (c. 515 BC) and its destruction by the Romans in 70 AD.
- **Intertestamental Period:** The period between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament.
- **Canon:** A collection of books recognized as authoritative scripture.
- **Diaspora:** The dispersion of Jews outside of Israel, particularly after the Babylonian exile.
- **Hasmonean Dynasty:** The Jewish dynasty that ruled Judea from 140 BC to 37 BC, following the Maccabean revolt.
- **Torah:** The first five books of the Hebrew Bible, also known as the Pentateuch or the Law of Moses.
- **Zealots:** A Jewish political movement in the 1st century AD that advocated for armed rebellion against Roman rule.
- **Apocalypse:** A genre of literature that reveals hidden knowledge or prophecies, often involving symbolic visions and divine interventions.
- **Apologetics:** The defense of the Christian faith through reasoned arguments and evidence.
- **Liturgy:** The prescribed form of public religious worship in a particular church or tradition.
- **Protreptic Discourse:** A discourse promoting a particular philosophy or way of life.

5. FAQs on deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 1, General Introduction, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on the Apocrypha

- **What is the Apocrypha, and why is it sometimes called "deuterocanonical"?**
- The Apocrypha refers to a collection of Jewish writings from roughly 300 BC to 100 AD that are included in the Old Testament of Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian Bibles but are not considered part of the Old Testament by Protestants. The term "deuterocanonical" is used by Catholics and Orthodox Christians to describe these books. It means "second canon," not implying inferiority, but simply that these books were recognized as canonical later than those books universally accepted.
- **Why do Protestant Christians often have reservations about reading the Apocrypha?**
- Many Protestants hold a prejudice that these books were tested and justifiably removed from the biblical canon because they lack value or are potentially harmful. Others may avoid them simply because they are included in the Catholic and Orthodox Old Testaments.
- **What was the view of the Protestant Reformers regarding the Apocrypha?**
- Contrary to the idea that the Reformers outright rejected the Apocrypha, figures like Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin held them in relatively high regard. Luther translated them for his German Bible, placing them between the Old and New Testaments to indicate they were not scripture but were "useful and good to read". The English Reformation acknowledged that these books were not canonical scripture but promoted them to be "read for example of life and instruction of manners".
- **What types of writings are found in the Apocrypha?**
- The Apocrypha includes a variety of genres, such as expansions and retellings of biblical stories (e.g., First Esdras, additions to Esther and Daniel), historical books (1 and 2 Maccabees), wisdom and instructional books (Wisdom of Ben Sira, Wisdom of Solomon, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah), philosophical treatises, and inspirational fiction (Tobit, Judith, Third Maccabees). It also contains an apocalypse (Second Esdras).

- **What is the historical significance of 1 and 2 Maccabees?**
- 1 and 2 Maccabees are crucial historical sources for understanding the tumultuous period from 175 to 141 BC in Judea. This era saw the question of Jewish identity put on the table, along with the violent resistance of the Maccabean revolt. These books document the challenges of assimilation versus maintaining Torah observance, which greatly impacted Jewish identity and influenced later movements like the Zealots.
- **How does the Apocrypha provide insight into intertestamental Judaism?**
- The Apocrypha offers valuable windows into Jewish theology, law, covenant, Jewish-Gentile relations, social practices, and religious piety during the intertestamental period (between the Old and New Testaments). It helps us understand the development of the theology of the covenant as Jews adapted and maintained their faith, as well as the tensions between assimilation and maintaining ancestral identity. It provides context to Jewish religious practices and beliefs of the time.
- **How does reading the Apocrypha enhance understanding of the New Testament?**
- The Apocrypha fills a crucial gap in understanding the Judaism out of which the church grew. Although the New Testament doesn't explicitly quote the Apocrypha, there are many resonances, implying that New Testament authors drew from a shared pool of cultural, religious, and ethical knowledge. Understanding intertestamental Judaism, as revealed in the Apocrypha, allows for a fuller picture of the context in which early Christians wrestled with challenges and formulated their responses.
- **What role did the Apocrypha play in the development of early Christian theology and practice?**
- The Apocrypha played a significant role in the formative centuries of Christian theology. Apocryphal texts influenced the development of early Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity. They were also used in apologetics directed toward Gentiles, offering anti-idolatry arguments. Furthermore, stories of Jewish martyrdom from books like 2 and 4 Maccabees inspired Christians facing persecution, and prayers and psalms found within the Apocrypha became staples of early Christian liturgical practice, particularly in Eastern Orthodox traditions.