

# **Dr. David deSilva, Apocrypha: Witness Between the Testament, Session 8**

## **Impact of the Apocrypha on the New Testament and Early Christianity**

### **Resources from NotebookLM**

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

#### **1. Abstract of deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 8, Impact of the Apocrypha on the New Testament and Early Christianity, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

Dr. DeSilva's lecture explores the potential influence of the Apocrypha on the New Testament and early Christian thought. While acknowledging that New Testament authors don't explicitly cite the Apocrypha as scripture, the lecture investigates possible formative impacts. The lecture uses the Wisdom of Ben Sira, particularly its availability and similarities with the teachings of Jesus and James, to show potential influence. It argues that wisdom traditions within the Apocrypha shaped early Christian theology, especially concerning Christology and Trinitarian doctrine, drawing on texts like the Wisdom of Solomon. In addition, the lecture discusses how texts like 2 and 4 Maccabees provided inspiration for early Christian martyrs facing persecution. The lecture shows that Apocryphal texts were valuable resources for early Christian thinkers in developing core doctrines, regardless of current disagreements about the canon.

#### **2. 23 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 8 – 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\_  
Session08.mp3

### 3. Briefing Document: deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 8, Impact of the Apocrypha on the New Testament and Early Christianity

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from Dr. deSilva's Lecture 8 on the impact of the Apocrypha on the New Testament and Early Christianity.

#### Briefing Document: Impact of the Apocrypha on the New Testament and Early Christianity

##### Main Themes:

- Influence vs. Citation:** The lecture explores the *influence* of Apocryphal texts on New Testament writings and early Christian thought, rather than direct citation. Dr. deSilva acknowledges that no New Testament author explicitly quotes the Apocrypha as sacred scripture. He states, "It is clear that no New Testament author explicitly cites a text from the Apocrypha, and it is certainly clear that they don't cite any text in the Apocrypha as sacred scripture." However, he argues for a formative impact, especially through indirect means.
- Methodological Considerations for Determining Influence:** DeSilva emphasizes the complexity of determining influence, setting out criteria to be considered. "Just because text A and text B say the same thing or similar things, one cannot automatically assume influence either way. One has to be able to demonstrate that the alleged influencing text was plausibly available to the allegedly influenced speaker or writer in some fashion." He also explains, "The content has to be sufficiently distinctive to speak about influence rather than simply both texts drawing on a commonly available source." The number of correspondences is important too.
- Wisdom of Ben Sira and its Potential Influence on Jesus:** A significant portion of the lecture focuses on the Wisdom of Ben Sira (Sirach) as a likely source of influence, particularly on Jesus' teachings. DeSilva argues that Ben Sira was well-positioned to influence Jewish teachers like Jesus due to his location in Jerusalem, his school, and his conservative voice. "I would say in the case of Ben Sira, and one could make a strong case that the author was well poised to enter the mainstream of Jewish wisdom and thus be available in some fashion to particularly motivated Jews who become teachers themselves, like Jesus and James did, to encounter that wisdom and incorporate that wisdom in some form." He highlights parallels between Ben Sira's teachings on generosity,

forgiveness, and presumption with similar themes in the Gospels. He does state, "I wouldn't suggest that he read the text of Ben Sira, that he opened up that scroll somewhere, but I would suggest that Ben Sira, the wisdom, the teaching of Ben Sira had permeated the wisdom of the sages, scribes, rabbis, teachers in Judea by virtue of his location."

- **Ben Sira and James:** DeSilva explores the shared themes between Ben Sira and the book of James, particularly concerning the power and danger of speech and the source of temptation. "Both Ben Sira, in about 200 B.C., and James, writing his epistle in...both sages address the danger of the tongue, the danger of speech. That is to say, speech can heal and help, speech can hurt and destroy, speech can win favor, and speech can alienate and lose favor." DeSilva points to similarities in their responses to the theological problem of who is responsible for sin.
- **Wisdom of Solomon and its influence on Paul:** DeSilva discusses how the Wisdom of Solomon likely influenced Paul's thinking on Gentile religion and ethics. Although dating the Wisdom of Solomon is difficult, DeSilva highlights that the Wisdom of Solomon provides access to Hellenistic Jewish traditions that also influenced Paul. Specifically, he discusses Paul's critique of idolatry as the root of moral disruption.
- **2 & 4 Maccabees and Early Christian Martyrdom:** The lecture examines how 2 and 4 Maccabees, particularly the stories of the Jewish martyrs, influenced early Christian understandings of martyrdom and the afterlife. "Origen, writing in 235 AD, tries to prepare two deacons, Ambrose and Protactitus, who have been arrested and are facing this same sort of scenario...And so when Origen writes his exhortation to martyrdom, it is, in effect, a lengthy homily on 2 Maccabees 6 and 7. It's to these Jewish martyrs that Christians have to look for the example that will steal their courage and give them the model that they need to face a very similar contest to the one faced by those martyrs before Antiochus IV." He highlights how figures like Origen, Cyprian, and Augustine drew inspiration from these texts during periods of Christian persecution.
- **Wisdom of Solomon and Christology:** DeSilva discusses how the Wisdom of Solomon influenced early Christian theology, particularly regarding the nature of Christ before the incarnation. He highlights the use of the figure of Wisdom as a way to understand the role of the Son of God. "early Christians naturally wondered, well then, what was the Son up to before the Word became flesh? Wisdom of Solomon provided a great deal of raw material for answering that question."

- **Apocrypha as Prophetic Witness:** Some early church fathers read the Apocrypha as prophetic witnesses to Christ. Specifically, Baruch 3:36-37 is interpreted as a prophecy of the incarnation, and Wisdom of Solomon 2 is interpreted as a prophecy of the crucifixion.

### **Key Ideas and Facts:**

- **The Importance of Context:** The lecture stresses the importance of understanding the historical and cultural context in which both the Apocrypha and the New Testament were written.
- **Ben Sira's teachings:** Parallels exist between Ben Sira's teachings on generosity, forgiveness, and avoiding presumption, and similar themes in the teachings of Jesus. Ben Sira advises limiting generosity to the pious, while Jesus urges generosity toward all. Ben Sira consigns women to the home, while Jesus welcomes women and challenges traditional gender roles.
- **Influence on Paul:** Paul adopts and uses a traditional Hellenistic Jewish description of what's wrong with Gentile culture, but adds his own perspective on what's wrong with Jewish practice.
- **Apocrypha Impacted Early Church:** Early Christians used 2 and 4 Maccabees as models for martyrdom, finding inspiration and courage in the stories of Jewish martyrs. Figures like Origen and Cyprian drew heavily on these texts in their writings.
- **Wisdom Theology:** Early Christians drew upon the Wisdom of Solomon to sort out fundamental issues of Christology and Trinitarian theology, such as the equality of the Father and the Son.
- **The lecture concludes by emphasizing the importance of familiarizing ourselves with the Apocrypha, considering its impact on Christian doctrine and the respect shown to these texts by early Christians.**

This briefing doc captures the essence of Dr. deSilva's lecture, providing a concise overview of the key arguments and examples presented.

## 4. Study Guide: deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 8, Impact of the Apocrypha on the New Testament and Early Christianity

### The Apocrypha's Impact on the New Testament and Early Christianity: A Study Guide Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. Why do New Testament authors avoid explicitly quoting from the Apocrypha as scripture?
2. According to Dr. deSilva, what three factors are important to consider when evaluating claims about the influence of one text upon another?
3. What evidence suggests that the Wisdom of Ben Sira was accessible and influential during the time of Jesus?
4. How does the portrayal of Jesus' education differ between the Infancy Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Luke?
5. What are some similarities between Ben Sira's teachings on generosity and Jesus' teachings in the Gospels?
6. How do Ben Sira and Jesus each address the concept of presumption before God and the reliance on pious acts?
7. In what ways does Jesus depart from Ben Sira's teachings on charity, and on his attitude towards women and Samaritans?
8. What common themes about the power and danger of speech are found in the writings of both Ben Sira and James?
9. How do Ben Sira and James each address the theological question of the source of temptation and evil?
10. How did Wisdom of Solomon influence early Christian thinking about Jesus before the incarnation, particularly concerning his relationship to God?

### Quiz Answer Key

1. New Testament authors likely avoided explicitly quoting the Apocrypha as scripture because they recognized that these texts did not hold the same level of authority for their audience as the established Hebrew scriptures. Quoting a text

not widely accepted as authoritative would not be persuasive in theological arguments or teachings.

2. When evaluating claims of textual influence, it's important to demonstrate that the influencing text was plausibly available to the influenced author, that the content shared is distinctive enough to suggest influence rather than a common source, and that there are numerous, detailed, and pervasive points of contact between the texts.
3. Fragments of Ben Sira have been discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls and at Masada, indicating its availability in the first century AD. Additionally, it is quoted hundreds of times in later Jewish literature, showcasing its continued influence after Jesus's life.
4. The Infancy Gospel of Thomas portrays Jesus as having innate, pre-packaged knowledge, confounding his teachers with his superior understanding. In contrast, Luke depicts Jesus actively learning in the temple, listening to teachers, asking questions, and participating in pedagogical conversation.
5. Both Ben Sira and Jesus emphasize the importance of giving to those in need and not turning away from the poor. They both connect acts of charity to reflecting God's character and becoming a child of God through imitating his generosity.
6. Ben Sira teaches that one cannot "buy off" God with good behavior or charitable acts, as sin requires genuine repentance. Jesus echoes this sentiment in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, illustrating that humility and recognition of one's own sin are more pleasing to God than self-righteous piety.
7. Ben Sira advocates for limiting generosity to the pious and good, while Jesus urges generosity towards all, good and bad, reflecting God's impartiality. Jesus also sharply departs from Ben Sira in his interactions with and inclusion of women and Samaritans, groups often marginalized in Ben Sira's teachings.
8. Both Ben Sira and James use the metaphor of fire to describe the destructive power of the tongue, emphasizing its capacity to cause great harm. They also recognize the duality of speech, noting that both blessings and curses can come from the same mouth.
9. Both Ben Sira and James reject the notion that God is the source of temptation or evil. Instead, they place the responsibility for sin on individual human desire, asserting that people are tempted by their own cravings and enticements.

10. Wisdom of Solomon depicted wisdom as being alongside God in creation, an emanation of God's power, and the image of God's goodness. This description provided early Christians with raw material for understanding Jesus before the incarnation.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the challenges in determining textual influence. Using specific examples from the lecture, illustrate how one might argue for or against the influence of the Apocrypha on the New Testament.
2. Compare and contrast the teachings of Jesus and Ben Sira on topics such as charity, forgiveness, and divine imitation. Where do they agree, and where do they diverge? How might these differences reflect their respective social and theological contexts?
3. Explore the ways in which the Wisdom of Solomon contributed to the development of early Christian Christology. How did early church fathers utilize the Wisdom of Solomon in their discussions about the nature and role of Jesus?
4. Analyze the significance of the martyr narratives in 2 and 4 Maccabees for early Christians facing persecution. How did these stories provide encouragement and a model for faithful endurance, and how were they incorporated into Christian tradition?
5. Consider the reasons why Dr. deSilva believes it is important for contemporary Christians to familiarize themselves with the Apocrypha. What value can these texts offer to modern readers, and what insights might they provide into the historical and theological development of Christianity?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apocrypha:** A collection of texts, primarily from the intertestamental period, that are included in the Catholic and Orthodox Bibles but are not part of the Protestant or Jewish biblical canon.
- **Ben Sira:** The author of the Wisdom of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus), a Jewish sage and teacher who lived in Jerusalem around 200 BCE.
- **Christology:** The branch of theology concerned with the nature, person, and work of Jesus Christ.
- **Eikon:** Greek word for image, often used in theological contexts to describe the relationship between Jesus and God.
- **Gentile:** A non-Jewish person.
- **Hellenistic Judaism:** A form of Judaism that combined Jewish religious tradition with elements of Greek culture and thought during the Hellenistic period.
- **Incarnation:** The Christian doctrine that God became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.
- **Martyr:** A person who is killed because of their religious or other beliefs.
- **Qumran:** An archaeological site near the Dead Sea where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, including fragments of Apocryphal texts like Ben Sira.
- **Talmud:** A central text of Rabbinic Judaism, consisting of the Mishnah and the Gemara, containing discussions and interpretations of Jewish law and tradition.
- **Trinitarian Theology:** The Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which holds that God is one being existing in three co-equal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- **Wisdom Literature:** A genre of literature common in the ancient Near East, characterized by its focus on practical advice, moral instruction, and reflections on the nature of wisdom and the good life. Examples include Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Wisdom of Solomon.



## 5. FAQs on deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 8, Impact of the Apocrypha on the New Testament and Early Christianity, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Apocrypha FAQ

- **What is the general attitude of New Testament authors toward the Apocrypha?**
- New Testament authors do not explicitly quote texts from the Apocrypha as sacred scripture. While this could indicate that they did not view these texts on the same level as scripture, there is considerable evidence that the Apocrypha had a formative impact on the thinking and writing of the New Testament authors, including Jesus himself.
- **What criteria are used to determine if a text from the Apocrypha influenced a New Testament author?**
- Establishing influence is complex. To demonstrate influence, one needs to show that the alleged influencing text (e.g., Ben Sira) was plausibly available to the influenced speaker or writer (e.g., Jesus, James). The content needs to be distinctive enough to suggest influence rather than a common source. Also, numerous, detailed, and pervasive points of contact between the texts strengthen the argument for influence.
- **How might the teachings of Ben Sira have influenced Jesus' teachings?**
- Ben Sira, located in Jerusalem, was a well-known and respected teacher. His teachings were available in the first century AD, with fragments found among the Dead Sea Scrolls and at Masada. Jesus, listening to his teachers, would likely have been exposed to Ben Sira's wisdom, even without knowing the source. For instance, similarities exist between Ben Sira's teachings on generosity to the poor and Jesus' teachings on giving to everyone who asks and loving one's enemies.
- **Can you provide an example of a New Testament teaching that finds a parallel in Ben Sira?**
- Jesus' teachings on forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer and the parable of the unforgiving servant have parallels in Ben Sira. Ben Sira taught that being merciful toward each other's offenses is a prerequisite for seeking mercy from God. This aligns with the logic in Jesus' parable, suggesting that we should not expect forgiveness if we do not forgive others.

- **How does the Wisdom of Solomon contribute to the understanding of Gentile accountability in Paul's writings?**
- The Wisdom of Solomon argues that even without direct revelation, Gentiles are not excused for worshiping idols because the imprint of God is present in creation. Contemplating creation should lead to awareness of God. Paul uses a similar argument in Romans 1, stating that God's invisible qualities are clearly seen through creation, leaving humanity without excuse for ungodly behavior and injustice.
- **How did 2 and 4 Maccabees impact the early church?**
- The story of the nine martyrs in 2 Maccabees 6 and 7, who were tortured for their faith and refused release for the hope of a better resurrection, influenced early Christian authors, especially during times of persecution. Origin, for example, used the story of these martyrs as a model of courage and perseverance for Christians facing similar trials. Cyprian of Carthage also used 2 Maccabees to urge Christians to endure persecution.
- **How did early church fathers use the Wisdom of Solomon to develop Christology?**
- Early church fathers used the figure of wisdom in the Wisdom of Solomon as a resource for understanding Jesus before the incarnation. The Wisdom of Solomon describes wisdom as a spotless reflection of God's being, using images of illumination and effulgence. These images appear in New Testament descriptions of Jesus, such as in Colossians 1:15-17 and Hebrews 1, which refer to Jesus as the image of the invisible God and the radiance of God's glory.
- **How did early Christian fathers read the Apocrypha as a prophetic witness to Christ?**
- Early Christian fathers read passages in the Apocrypha as prophecies of Christ, similar to how they interpreted the Old Testament. They interpreted Baruch 3:36-37, where God gives wisdom to Jacob and then appears on earth, as a prophecy of the incarnation. They also read Wisdom of Solomon 2 as a prophecy of the crucifixion, with its description of the ungodly plotting against the righteous one and testing him to see if God will assist him.