

Dr. David deSilva, Apocrypha: Witness Between the Testament, Session 9

Apocrypha in the Christian Church and Canon Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 9, Apocrypha in the Christian Church and Canon, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. DeSilva's lecture explores the historical position of the Apocrypha within both Jewish and Christian canons. It begins by noting that while Judaism did not grant these books scriptural authority, early Christians inherited scriptures without a finalized canon. The lecture then traces the varying levels of acceptance and debate surrounding the Apocrypha within Christianity, from the early church fathers to the Reformation. It highlights figures like Luther and Calvin who valued the texts even while distinguishing them from canonical scripture. The lecture covers the decisions made by the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent. The presentation concludes by examining the Apocrypha's place in different denominations today and advocating for its continued study, rejecting its willful neglect.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 9 – 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_
Session09.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 9, Apocrypha in the Christian Church and Canon

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from Dr. DeSilva's lecture on the Apocrypha in the Christian Church and Canon.

Briefing Document: The Apocrypha in the Christian Church and Canon

Main Theme: This lecture surveys the historical place of the Apocrypha within various Christian canons and the reasoning behind the different decisions made regarding their inclusion or exclusion. It examines the Apocrypha's status in Judaism, its reception by the early church, and its evolving role throughout Christian history, culminating in the Reformation and modern perspectives.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **The Jewish Context:**
 - While Judaism didn't have formal, vigorous canonical debates to the same degree as Christianity, by the 2nd century BC, groupings of authoritative texts (Law, Prophets, Other Books) were emerging. "In the Prologue to Ben Sirah, Ben Sirah's grandson, in about 132 BC, talks about the law, the prophets, and the other books of our ancestors."
 - The Torah and the Major/Minor Prophets were largely undisputed. Debate centered on the "Other Books" category.
 - By the end of the first century AD, the concept of a closed canon was developing in Judaism. Josephus refers to 22 books considered divinely inspired.
 - The prophetic voice was believed to have ceased after the rebuilding of the Second Temple. "It seems to be...the conviction that the prophetic voice no longer spoke after the rebuilding of the second temple was complete." This influenced decisions about which books to include.
 - Even outside the canon, texts like Ben Sirah were valued and cited in rabbinic literature.
- **The "Myth" of the Alexandrian Canon:**
 - The idea that Alexandrian Jews had a much wider canon than Palestinian Jews is largely a myth. Claims that the Septuagint reflects a broader Alexandrian Jewish

canon are inaccurate. Philo of Alexandria suggests their canon aligned with what is now called the Hebrew Bible.

- "The myth is that what we find in the so-called Septuagint of the 4th and 5th-century Christian church is the same as the Septuagint that Greek-speaking Jews used at the time of Christ."
- **Early Church Reception:**
 - The early church inherited scriptures but not a "closed list" from the synagogue.
 - The early church sought texts reflecting its own faith, hope, and ethos. It quickly embraced the letters of Paul and other apostolic writings.
 - The early church assigned high authority to some Jewish texts (Apocrypha) not equally esteemed in Judaism.
 - While Jesus and his earliest followers likely didn't cite Apocryphal books as "scripture," their influence is evident in the New Testament.
 - Valuing the Apocryphal books alongside or even as scripture was a "distinctly Christian phenomenon" in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The martyr stories in 2nd and 4th Maccabees were important for the early church.
- **The Greek vs. Hebrew Text Debate:**
 - A key early question was whether the Greek or Hebrew form of certain books (Daniel, Esther, Jeremiah) should be considered canonical.
 - Figures like Irenaeus and Hippolytus supported the Greek forms (the "fatter" forms).
 - Julius Africanus challenged the inclusion of parts of Daniel not in the Hebrew text.
 - Origen defended the use of the Greek texts, arguing that God would have ensured the right scriptures for the Christian church. "Are we to suppose that the God who so loved us to give us his Son didn't also take some thought for the kind of scripture text type we should have, and should be using in our churches?"
- **Differing Canons and Authorities:**
 - Melito of Sardis and Athanasius promoted a shorter Old Testament canon (aligned with the modern Protestant canon).

- Athanasius saw apocryphal books as useful for instruction but not of equal status to canonical scripture.
- Jerome favored the Hebrew texts and designated the Apocrypha as "ecclesiastical books" - valuable for the church but second-order.
- Augustine supported a broader Old Testament canon, including Tobit, Judith, Maccabees, Esdras, Wisdom, and Sirach, aligning with the Western Church's practice.
- The Council of Carthage (397 AD) affirmed Augustine's position.
- Clement of Alexandria and John Chrysostom regarded Wisdom of Solomon and Ben Sirach as scripture.
- **Evidence from Early Biblical Codices:**
 - 4th and 5th century bound codices (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus) show variation in their inclusion of apocryphal books. This indicates an "amorphous Old Testament" even at this time.
 - Some codices also include additional New Testament books as appendices.
- **The Reformation:**
 - The Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) led reformers to define the limits of Scripture.
 - The reformers moderated but didn't reject the Apocrypha.
 - Martin Luther translated the Apocrypha and placed it between the Testaments, deeming it "useful and good to read." He specifically commended books like Wisdom of Solomon and 1 Maccabees. "These are books that, though not esteemed like the Holy Scriptures, are still both useful and good to read."
 - Zwingli and Calvin also viewed the Apocrypha as useful, but to be interpreted in line with canonical scripture.
 - Menno Simons even quoted the Apocrypha alongside Hebrew Bible books with equal authority.
 - The English Reformation saw the Apocrypha used for "example of life and instruction of manners" but not to establish doctrine.

- The Council of Trent (1546) reaffirmed the Catholic Church's inclusion of the Apocrypha.
- This led to a more negative reaction from some Protestants, culminating in the Westminster Confession (1647), which ranked the Apocrypha as merely human writings, without the positive commendations found earlier.
- Despite this, Bibles continued to be printed with the Apocrypha for some time.
- **Modern Perspectives:**
- Eastern Orthodox churches generally receive these books as deuterocanonical, with a variety of local views and practices.
- Roman Catholic churches affirm most of the books as part of their Old Testament.
- Anglican and Episcopal churches retain optional readings from the Apocrypha in their lectionary.
- Many Protestant churches have removed the public reading of these texts entirely.

Conclusion:

- The nearly 2,000-year debate shows the Apocrypha's importance to the Christian Church.
- The books have "played a large role" and "never disappeared completely from view."
- The options in the debate were generally either to regard these books as of equal value to the rest of the Old Testament canon or to esteem them at a level just below the level of Scripture.
- The least recommended position, according to Dr. DeSilva, is "willful neglect or even contempt for these texts that the Church Universal has largely treasured throughout its existence."

4. Study Guide: deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 9, Apocrypha in the Christian Church and Canon

The Apocrypha in Christian History and Canon

Study Guide

This study guide is designed to help you review and understand the material from Dr. David DeSilva's Lecture 9, "The Apocrypha in the Christian Church and Canon."

Key Concepts

- **Canon:** A collection of books accepted as authoritative scripture.
- **Apocrypha:** Books of Jewish origin, written primarily between 200 BC and 100 AD, not included in the Hebrew Bible but present in the Septuagint and valued by Christians.
- **Deuterocanonical:** Term used by some Christians to refer to books of the Apocrypha considered canonical in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions but not in Protestantism.
- **Septuagint (LXX):** The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.
- **Hebrew Bible:** The canon of scripture for Judaism, which also constitutes the Old Testament in most Christian traditions.
- **Alexandrian Canon (Myth):** The incorrect idea that Alexandrian Jews had a wider, more inclusive canon than Palestinian Jews.
- **Sola Scriptura:** Reformation principle emphasizing the Bible as the sole infallible source of authority for Christian faith and practice.
- **Ecclesiastical Books:** Term used by Jerome to describe Apocryphal books, meaning they are valued in the Church and useful for edification but not canonical.
- **Lectionary:** A collection of readings from the Bible appointed for use in church services.
- **Textual Criticism:** The practice of comparing different versions of texts to determine the most accurate version.

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to the lecture, what scriptures did the early Christians inherit from the synagogue?
2. What rationale did Jewish authorities offer for excluding books written after the rebuilding of the Second Temple from their canon?
3. What is the myth of the Alexandrian canon, and why is it considered a myth?
4. How did the early church view the Apocryphal books, and how did this differ from the Jewish community's view?
5. What was Julius Africanus's challenge to the church's use of the Greek versions of Daniel and Esther, and how did Origen respond to this challenge?
6. What was Jerome's view of the Apocrypha, and how did his Latin Vulgate Bible reflect this view?
7. How did Augustine differ from Jerome in his view of the Apocrypha?
8. How did the Reformers, such as Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, view and utilize the Apocrypha?
9. What action taken by the Council of Trent on the Apocrypha spurred Protestants to push back on the use of the Apocrypha?
10. How are the Apocrypha treated in modern Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican/Episcopal churches?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The early Christians inherited scriptures from the synagogue, but they did not inherit a *closed* canon. While the Torah and the Prophets were considered authoritative, the boundaries of the "other books" were less clearly defined.
2. Jewish authorities believed that the prophetic voice ceased after the rebuilding of the Second Temple. Therefore, books written after this period, like Ben Sirach, were not considered to have the same level of authority as earlier works.
3. The myth of the Alexandrian canon claims that Greek-speaking Jews in Alexandria had a broader canon of scripture, including the Apocrypha, than Palestinian Jews. This is a myth because evidence suggests that Alexandrian Jews like Philo adhered to a canon similar to the Hebrew Bible, and because the 4th and 5th century

codices used by the early Christian church have been misidentified as being from the same time as the origin of the Septuagint.

4. The early church valued Apocryphal books as resources for ethics, reflection on God, and inspiration, even though they did not use them with citation formulas that signified canonicity. This was different from the Jewish community, which did not generally consider these books to be scripture.
5. Julius Africanus questioned the use of the Greek versions of Daniel and Esther that contained material not found in the Hebrew texts. Origen responded by arguing that Christian churches had long used the Greek texts and that God would have ensured the proper scriptures for Christians, regardless of Jewish opinions.
6. Jerome viewed the Apocrypha as "ecclesiastical books," valuable for reading in churches and edification but not canonical. His Latin Vulgate Bible translated the Apocrypha but marked them off as a second order of books separate from the books that he translated based on the Hebrew texts.
7. Augustine disagreed with Jerome, arguing that the Apocryphal books (Tobit, Judith, Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, etc.) should be included among the books of the Old Testament. He considered them authoritative, following the practice of many Christians in the Western Church.
8. Reformers like Luther and Zwingli took a moderate approach, translating and including the Apocrypha in their Bibles in a separate section between the Old and New Testaments. They considered them useful and good to read for ethical guidance and historical knowledge, though not for establishing doctrine.
9. After the Council of Trent affirmed the Apocrypha as canonical, many Protestants pushed back against their use, viewing it as a defining difference between Protestantism and Catholicism. This led to a decline in the printing and reading of the Apocrypha in Protestant circles.
10. Eastern Orthodox churches generally accept the Apocrypha as deuterocanonical with varying degrees of emphasis based on local practice. Roman Catholic churches affirm most of the Apocrypha as part of their Old Testament canon. Anglican/Episcopal churches include readings from the Apocrypha as optional lessons in their lectionary.

Essay Questions

Consider these questions for a more in-depth exploration of the topic.

1. Trace the development of the Jewish canon from the Second Century BC to the end of the First Century AD, noting key figures and texts that shed light on the evolving understanding of authoritative scriptures.
2. Compare and contrast the views of Jerome and Augustine on the Apocrypha, and explain how their differing perspectives influenced the Western Church's understanding of these texts.
3. Analyze the impact of the Reformation on the understanding and use of the Apocrypha in Protestant traditions, considering the roles of figures like Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, as well as the influence of events like the Council of Trent.
4. Discuss the factors that contributed to the removal of the Apocrypha from most printed Protestant Bibles by the 19th century, and evaluate the consequences of this development for Protestant theology and practice.
5. Explore the various ways in which the Apocrypha are used and understood in different Christian traditions today, including Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican/Episcopal churches, and consider the reasons for these differences.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apocrypha:** From the Greek meaning "hidden" or "obscure." Refers to a collection of Jewish texts written primarily during the intertestamental period (between the Old and New Testaments) that are not included in the Hebrew Bible but are part of the Septuagint and are considered canonical by some Christians.
- **Canon:** A list of books considered to be authoritative scripture. The process of canonization involves recognizing and formally accepting certain texts as divinely inspired and normative for faith and practice.
- **Deuterocanonical:** From the Greek meaning "belonging to the second canon." This term is used primarily by Roman Catholics to refer to the books of the Old Testament whose canonical status was disputed for a time but which were ultimately accepted as part of the Catholic canon at the Council of Trent. These books are often referred to as "Apocrypha" by Protestants.

- **Hebrew Bible:** The collection of books that constitute the sacred scripture of Judaism. This collection is also known as the Tanakh, an acronym for Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings). The Hebrew Bible forms the basis of the Christian Old Testament.
- **Septuagint (LXX):** A Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible produced in Alexandria, Egypt, beginning in the third century BC. The Septuagint includes not only translations of the books found in the Hebrew Bible but also additional texts that are not part of the Hebrew canon (the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical books).
- **Alexandrian Canon (Myth):** The mistaken idea that Alexandrian Jews had a wider canon than Palestinian Jews, and that it matches the Old Testament canon that was in the fourth and fifth century codices from the Christian church.
- **Sola Scriptura:** Latin for "Scripture alone." This is a central tenet of the Protestant Reformation, which asserts that the Bible is the sole infallible source of authority for Christian faith and practice. It rejects the authority of tradition, church councils, and the Pope as being equal to or superior to the Bible.
- **Ecclesiastical Books:** A designation used by Jerome to describe the Apocrypha. It implies that these books are valuable for reading in churches and for moral instruction, but they do not possess the same level of authority as canonical scripture.
- **Lectionary:** A structured collection of biblical readings appointed for use in public worship services on specific days of the liturgical year. The lectionary provides a systematic approach to reading through the Bible in a planned and intentional way.
- **Textual Criticism:** A scholarly discipline that seeks to determine the most accurate and reliable text of a document by comparing and analyzing different manuscripts and versions. Textual criticism is particularly important for studying ancient texts like the Bible, where variations exist among different manuscripts.

5. FAQs on deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 9, Apocrypha in the Christian Church and Canon, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Here is an 8-question FAQ regarding the Apocrypha, based on the provided source:

What is the Apocrypha, and how was it viewed in early Judaism?

The Apocrypha refers to a collection of Jewish texts not included in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament recognized by some Jewish traditions and many Christian denominations. While not generally considered scriptural authority in Judaism, there wasn't a closed canon in early Judaism at the time of the early church. Various Jewish groups held differing views, with some like the Qumran community considering texts like 1 Enoch authoritative. By the end of the first century AD, a narrower canon was emerging in Judaism, leading to debates about books like Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Ben Sirach. A key rationale for excluding some books was the belief that the prophetic voice had ceased after the rebuilding of the Second Temple.

How did the early Christian Church view and use the Apocrypha?

The early Church inherited scriptures from the synagogue but no closed canon. Early Christians valued the Apocrypha, often assigning it high authority alongside scripture, although not necessarily reciting it with the same citation formulas as canonical books. The Apocrypha influenced New Testament writings and provided resources for ethics, reflection on God, and inspiration, particularly the martyr stories in books like 2nd and 4th Maccabees.

What was the "myth of the Alexandrian canon," and why is it significant?

The "myth of the Alexandrian canon" suggests that Greek-speaking Jews in Alexandria had a much wider canon than Palestinian Jews, reflected in the Septuagint. However, evidence suggests that Alexandrian Jews like Philo did not extend their sense of scriptural boundaries beyond what is now called the Hebrew Bible. The myth is often used to justify a wider Old Testament canon, but historical evidence doesn't support it.

What were the key debates surrounding the Apocrypha in the early Church?

Key debates included: whether the Greek or Hebrew version of certain books (like Daniel and Esther) should be considered canonical, and whether the Jewish canon should be determinative for the Christian canon of the Old Testament. Figures like Julius Africanus questioned the authority of portions of Daniel not found in the Hebrew text, while

Origen defended the use of the Greek texts used by Christian churches, citing long-standing practice and divine providence.

How did figures like Athanasius, Jerome, and Augustine contribute to the discussion on the Apocrypha?

Athanasius promoted a shorter Old Testament canon but advocated reading books like Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach for instruction. Jerome, influenced by his study of Hebrew, favored the shorter Hebrew canon and designated the Apocrypha as "ecclesiastical books," useful but of secondary status. Augustine, conversely, supported the inclusion of books like Tobit, Judith, and Maccabees in the Old Testament, reflecting the practice of many Western Christians.

What was the position of the Reformers on the Apocrypha?

The Reformers, guided by the principle of *sola scriptura*, generally moderated the use of the Apocrypha. Martin Luther translated the Apocrypha and placed it between the Testaments, considering it useful and good to read. Zwingli and Calvin also acknowledged the Apocrypha's value, but with caveats, emphasizing the primacy of canonical scriptures.

How did the Council of Trent and the Westminster Confession affect the status of the Apocrypha?

The Council of Trent (1546) reaffirmed the Catholic Church's acceptance of the Apocrypha as part of the Old Testament canon. This move spurred a reaction among some Protestants. The Westminster Confession (1647) marked a shift in Protestant assessment, specifically ranking the Apocrypha alongside other human writings with no special commendation.

How is the Apocrypha viewed and used in different Christian denominations today?

Eastern Orthodox churches generally accept the Apocrypha as deuterocanonical, with variations in practice among different Orthodox traditions. Roman Catholic churches, following Trent, include the Apocrypha in their Old Testament canon. Anglican and Episcopal churches may use readings from the Apocrypha in their lectionary. Other Protestant churches have largely removed the Apocrypha and may be unfamiliar with its content, which goes against the advice from Reformation leaders such as Luther and Zwingli.