



St Catherine's Seminary is the name of the internal study and training program of the Old Catholic Apostolic Church

The Apocrypha

Many Christians (nor others!) even know that the Apocrypha exists. Of those that know it, it is often mistakenly thought to be scripture from the period between the Old and New Testaments. The Apocrypha is a collection of scripture that the Jewish Sanhedrin at Jamnia in AD90 (who decided what was Old Testament) decided was not sufficient to be included in the Hebrew scripture (as much of this was originally written in Hebrew), but were sufficiently important to be included somewhere. The Greek scholars included it in their scripture, which was for Greek speaking Jews in Egypt. Early Christians used the Greek scripture and so the Apocrypha came to be used as scripture. The Roman Catholics felt that part of 2 Maccabees was an important witness to a dogmatic truth and supported it. Now, the church is broader than just the Jewish (O.T.) Greek and Roman Catholic viewpoints, and some of the reasons for not including this material no longer apply. Actually, much of this material fits very appropriately to today's evangelistic growth. The term 'Apocrypha' means hidden writings. Theologians call the Apocrypha 'Deutero-canonical writings' following what St Jerome wrote: 'the church reads these for example of life, and for instruction: yet it does not use them to establish doctrine'. The remainder of the Bible gives plenty enough material to do this. There are places where the Apocrypha seems to contradict the books of the Bible and some places where information is wrong (for example, King Nebechadnezzar is stated as the King of the Assyrians - which he was not). The Apocrypha like any other historical or scholarly study has inconsistencies and inaccuracies; but also has different and confirming viewpoints. So for us and many others, the Apocrypha adds to, expands, and sets in context many of the themes familiar in other parts of scripture.

1 Esdras

Covers the story of exile and return in the same way as many Old Testament books do. The out come is similar too: Faith in God, and obedience to Him yields success and victory, whereas disobedience leads to disaster and oppression. Esdras helps us by having a different perspective, and from a different time frame, which gives us an alternative context by which to gauge this. Period covered: approx. 530 to 500BC.

2 Esdras

Continues the story of 1 Esdras with the return of exiles to Jerusalem, but with visions of the last days and prophecies of doom for the ungodly. Period covered: approx 530 to 400BC

Tobit

Tobit is a little like Daniel, in as much as he has difficulties, and faces challenging times. Like Daniel he is captive (of Israel's old enemies the Assyrians). Like Daniel, Tobit's faith in God gains his freedom. The adventures of Tobit (Tob Ch 4) tells how Tobit met with Raphael, the messenger of God. Tobit lived long enough to hear of the destruction of Ninevah, capital of the Assyrians. Period covered: approx 590 to 500BC

Judith

This book is about a wealthy woman who, though widowed, brought triumph for the people of her race against the Assyrians, who were long enemies of the Israelites. She infiltrated the enemy and pretended to defect. She went to Holofernes, a substantial leader under King Nebuchadnezzar, and under the guise of her defection killed him. Holofernes' men did not intervene as they thought he was sleeping (intimately) with her. When Judith told the Israelites to stage a mock invasion of their camp, Holofernes' men went to rouse their leader and found his headless body. Their morale was gone and they capitulated. Judith freed the Israelites and became one of the handful of female Jewish heroes. Period covered: approx 600 to 400BC

The Rest of Esther

These are literally the rest of the chapters of the O. T. book of Esther which are not found in Hebrew nor some Greek manuscripts. Some Apocryphas print them with the verses of the O.T. within them for ease of reading. The Greek manuscripts differ substantially from the Hebrew. These additional writings come from the Greek. This is important stuff, as Esther was a Jewess who became queen: she had a profound affect on all history. Period covered: approx 600 to 450BC

The Wisdom of Solomon

Here is the story of wisdom and justice being the way to salvation: obedience to God and His commandments, and the reverse being the road to doom. A familiar theme in many O.T. and other scriptures. Period covered: approx 1250 to 1150BC

Ecclesiasticus

This writing is called The Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach in some versions. (Jesus was of course a popular name in that part of the world in that time frame. This is NOT Jesus son of Mary, The Christ). This is a long writing where the ways of wisdom and advice on social behaviour and heroes from Israel's past are set forth in prose. This truly is scripture, inspired by God and it leads the reader: "If he lives by them, he will be equal to anything, with the light of the Lord shining on his path" Eccl. 50:29. This writing has a preface, which indicates that it is a scholarly work, recorded for the furtherance of faith and also of learning. Period covered: Difficult to assess

Baruch, with the Epistle of Jeremiah

In some versions this is a single book, but in your Apocrypha it may be two separate scriptures. This book compliments the book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament. Baruch was Jeremiah's assistant, a sort of secretary. Many of the themes covered here, and of

course the two main writers, Baruch and Jeremiah himself are common to the O.T. book of Jeremiah. However, Baruch covers the material from a different viewpoint and hence adds value to our understanding. Baruch was writing to encourage the captive Israelites as Jeremiah was. The epistle is a letter not included in the O.T. book of Jeremiah about the folly of idolatry. Period covered approx 720 to 550BC

The Song of the Three

This scripture is part of the Old Testament book of Daniel in Greek manuscripts and fits between Dan. 3:23 and Dan. 3:24. Hebrew manuscripts do not have it. It continues and expands the story of what is happening in the furnace. For best results read in conjunction with Daniel! Period covered: approx 530 to 500BC

The History of Susanna (also called Daniel and Susanna)

Joachim was a wealthy man with a fine house, and servants. Some of his servants tricked Susanna who was raped in the garden and then falsely accused of allowing a young man to do this to her - she was framed. A dubious trial was held and the false accusations against her were found. Daniel (who was a young man at the time) called out from the crowd and persuaded the re-opening of the trial. Susanna was vindicated and the perpetrators 'dealt with under the Law of Moses'. A story of faith in God vindicating innocence, and the brave outspoken-ness of Daniel. Period covered: approx 530 to 500BC

Bel and the Dragon (also called Daniel, Bel and the Snake)

Daniel in the Old Testament is continued (and added to) in this scripture. After Daniel had risen in King Nebechadnezzars court to a trusted position, Daniel would not worship the Idols of Babylonia including Bel, and the Snake. This short passage tells how Daniel destroyed the idolatry and worshipped the only true God. Period covered: 530 to 500BC

The Prayer of Manasseh

Manasseh was King of Judah between 687 to 642BC. This short part of the Apocrypha is his prayer for repentance reputedly written while he was held captive in Babylon. Period covered: 680 to 640BC

1 Maccabees

When the Temple was desecrated in 167BC, and the Greek empire was exercising its influence, hostilities arose between rival groups led by Jason and Menelaus. These hostilities escalated into all out war. The scene was set for the rise of the Maccabees who saw it as their duty to win independence for the Jews and in doing so, to establish a new high-priestly house. The Jewish revolt which they hoped would bring in a new era, under a strong God-given leader would follow....Period covered: 1000 to 250BC

2 Maccabees

This book continues with the story of Maccabean warrior priests. The Righteous Teacher is a central character. He was a priest, and an ardent supporter of the Zadokite high priesthood and so presumably was of Zadokite origin himself. Period covered: 950 to 200BC

Old Catholic Apostolic Church – Scripture Training Program

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