

# *How We Got The Bible*

Understanding the Process  
& History of the  
Canonization of the Bible  
Part IX

# The Dead Sea Scrolls

# The Dead Sea Scrolls

- In response to the perceived failures of the Maccabean revolt, the Essenes – a conservative, messianic and eschatological sect of Judaism – formed a separatist community on the banks of the Dead Sea, 12 miles from Jerusalem, called Qumran
- The remains of this community were unearthed in 1947 and constituted the greatest religious archaeological find of the century

# The Dead Sea Scrolls

- 28 Complete scrolls and more than 100,000 fragments of manuscripts including
  - Every book of our OT, except Esther
  - Other materials: community rules, hymns, commentaries, battle plans
- The Essenes studied, copied, and wrote commentaries on scripture

# The Dead Sea Scrolls

- The importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls:
  - They verify the sacred nature and preserved status of every book of the OT except Esther
  - The substance and form of every book is *exactly* the same as the corresponding books that we have today
- They do *not*:
  - solidify the shape of the canon
  - verify which books were accepted or rejected or why

# History of the OT Canon

In summary, the process of canonization of the Hebrew Bible/OT appears to have been gradual rather than formal, beginning with the Torah and extending to the Prophets and Writings by or in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC with a distinction between canonical and apocryphal books emerging in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD

# The Septuagint

# The Septuagint

- With the rise and domination of Alexander the Great and his “policy of fusion”, Greek became the world language. To succeed in business people everywhere needed to speak and write in Greek
- As Jews spread throughout the Greek world they lost their native tongue of Hebrew and a growing desire and need arose for the accessibility of Scripture in Greek

# The Septuagint

- According to legend, 70 Jewish scholars and scribes in Egypt undertook the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC
- The result was called the *Septuagint*, after the Greek word for “seventy”
- Its use was evidenced in Qumran as well
- The Septuagint was the Bible for the early Christian Church

# Christianity and Judaism

The early church's appropriation of the Hebrew Bible, in the form of the Septuagint, raised the question of Christianity's relationship to and theological perspective of Judaism.

- How did the Jews view Christianity?
- How did the Christians view Judaism?
- What was the Jewish response to the Christian use of the Septuagint?

# Christianity and Judaism

- ✓ Acts: Initially Judaism rejected the claims of Christianity
- ✓ Christianity rooted itself in Judaic tradition and customs
- ✓ Judaism argued that there was significant difference between the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint (e.g. the use and name of “God”)
- ✓ Judaism ignored the Septuagint, relinquishing it to the Christians

# The Apocrypha

# The Apocrypha

- ✓ The word *apocrypha* means “hidden” or “secret” which has fostered the common misconception that these books hold hidden or secret truths that challenge the teachings of the Bible
- ✓ There is nothing hidden within these books – they are a collection of Jewish documents that provide us with information about Judaism in the two centuries leading up to the time of Christ

# The Apocrypha

- ✓ They were written in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC
- ✓ They were originally called the “deuterocanonical books” because they were not regarded as scripture by the Jews
  - ✓ 4 Ezra mentions the 24 books to be read by all and the 70 others that are good for the wise
  - ✓ “Apocrypha...are not held equal to sacred scriptures and nevertheless are useful and good to read.” - Martin Luther

# The Apocrypha

- ✓ None of the books claim to be inspired or to be the Word of God
- ✓ The term “Apocrypha” was first used by the Latin Church Father Jerome who also separated them from sacred scripture and did not include them in his Latin translation of the Bible, the *Vulgate*
- ✓ There were a number of other writings called *Pseudepigrapha* which were considered false writings and were rejected by Christians and Jews

# The Apocrypha

- ✓ 1 Esdras (3 Ezra): an elaboration of Ezra's religious reforms
- ✓ 1 & 2 Maccabees: a history of the Jews and their revolt against Antiochus
- ✓ Ecclesiasticus & Wisdom of Solomon: wisdom literature similar to Proverbs
- ✓ Letter of Jeremiah: correspondence to Jewish captives about to be taken to Babylon

# The Apocrypha

- ✓ Baruch: correspondence from Jeremiah's helper to Jews in Jerusalem during the Exile
- ✓ 2 Esdras (4 Ezra): an apocalyptic book of visions similar to Revelation
- ✓ Tobit: tale of Tobit, an Israelite in Nineveh, involving magic

# The Apocrypha

- ✓ Judith: story of a noble Israelite widow who slays an Assyrian general
- ✓ Susanna: tale of a woman rescued by Daniel after she refused to have sex with two elders
- ✓ Additions to Esther: additions to the story of Esther that bring more religious flavor and Godly tone

# The Apocrypha

- ✓ Bel and the Dragon: story of Daniel's faithfulness and battles in Babylon over idolatry
- ✓ Prayer of Azariah and Song of the 3 Hebrew Boys: narrative details about what happened inside the fiery furnace
- ✓ Prayer of Manasseh: King Manasseh's prayer

# The Apocrypha

- They were originally rejected as Holy by the Jews but worthy of being read
- There was fluidity, debate, and indecision in the early church around these books. Some fathers rejected them, e.g. Jerome, others embraced them, e.g. Augustine
- The first official proclamation concerning their status wasn't until the Council of Trent in 1545AD

# The Apocrypha

The Apocrypha played a critical role in the Reformation

- *Sola Scriptura* → what constitutes sacred scripture?
- Luther objected to passages in the apocrypha that offered biblical grounds for prayers for the dead → *selling of indulgences & purgatory*
- Luther included a version of the apocrypha as an appendix in his bible, not interspersed among the others

# The Apocrypha

- In response, and rejection of the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church embraced the apocrypha and it is included in their Bible to this day

# The Apocrypha

In summary, the apocryphal books, although they are not considered scripture, do provide a valuable source of information about the history and religion of the Jews. Their exclusion in some Christian traditions was a matter of doctrinal debate not out of ignorance or an attempt to hide some information that would challenge our faith.

Next: The New Testament