

**Christ the Lord Episcopal Church**  
***Bible Study The Apocrypha***  
*Session 1*

**Introduction to the Apocrypha**

The Apocrypha is made up of:

Tobit	1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Maccabees
Judith	1 Esdras
Additions to Esther	Prayer of Manasseh
Wisdom of Solomon	Psalm 151
Wisdom of Ben Sira-Sirach	3 <sup>rd</sup> Maccabees
Baruch	2 <sup>nd</sup> Esdras ( <i>composed of 5 Ezra; 4 Ezra; 6 Ezra</i> )
Letter of Jeremiah	4 <sup>th</sup> Ezra ( <i>Pseudepigrapha composed of 2 Esdras 3-4</i> )
Additions to Daniel	5 <sup>th</sup> Ezra ( <i>composed of 2 Esdras 1-2</i> )
Prayer of Azariah	6 <sup>th</sup> Ezra ( <i>composed of 2 Esdras 15-16</i> )
Song of the Three Jews	4 <sup>th</sup> Maccabees
Susanna	
Bel and the Dragon	

**History of the Apocrypha**

To many Christians “The Apocrypha” represents a collection of forbidden or heretical books scrupulously to be avoided. *Apocrypha*; singular, *Apocryphon*; plural: is an adjective that has taken on a pejorative nuance: “hidden for a good reason” or “suspicious.” However, from a scholarly view, these text contains a similar message to the Old and New Testaments with consistent evidence that these writing were honored throughout history.

The writings of what is traditionally known as the *Old Testament Apocrypha* are a vital witness to faith focusing on the Jewish people living in the period of the third century BCE to the first century CE. The books bear witness to what it meant to remain faithful to the God of Israel during a tumultuous period of history. This period of time presented political upheaval with empires fighting for domination and Judaism itself being in peril as the Greek culture led many away from persevering the Mosaic covenant based on Torah.

Reasons to study the Apocrypha include getting a more reliable picture of Judaism from 200 BCE to 100 CE. This means it is very possible Jesus was familiar with these readings as they would have been fresh and still forming during his lifetime. These readings close the gap between the Old and New Testament.

For those familiar with the Apocrypha, one will notice many phrases from these writings that appear again within the New Testament and are regularly recited in liturgy - only under a different source. The authors of Matthew and James appear to have had more than a passing

familiarity with Ben Sira which led Jesus himself to reuse these phrases in his preaching. The Lord's Prayer is part of the writings also included in a base form in Ben Sira.

The book of Tobit contains a monologue on having possession and giving them away in proportion - to deliver you from death and going into the Darkness. Jesus likewise promotes the giving away of possession to the needy, as the means by which to lay up a treasure for oneself.

Paul's letter to the church in Rome shows that he enjoyed an intimate knowledge of the Wisdom of Solomon or at least the traditions it is based on, which in turn critique the Gentiles of being ignorant of the One God and Paul uses the description of the resulting moral chaos of non-believers found in Wisdom.

The Apocrypha has been used to influence Christian thought and culture including Augustine's *City of God*, a Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Understanding the life and times of Jesus along with Early Christianity is helped by understanding the Apocrypha, otherwise one looks to the Old Testament struggling to fit an ancient Israel culture with the more modern times (Greek culture) of Jesus' lifetime.

\* \* *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context and Significance*, David A. deSilva, Baker Academic, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2018.