

A Survey of the Apocrypha and the Intertestamental Period

Lecture Notes

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Writings of the Inter-Testamental Period

Summary of Historical Period:

- I. Babylonian Captivity (Daniel's 1st Beast)
Faithless Jews move to Egypt and drag Jeremiah with them

- II. Restoration by Cyrus (Daniel's 2nd Beast)
Israel under Persia

- III:1 Invasion of Alexander (Daniel's 3rd Beast, 1st Greek head)
- III:2 Rule by Greek Egypt under Ptolemies (Daniel's 2nd Greek head)
- III:3 Deliverance from Egypt by Antiochus III of Greek Syria (Daniel's 3rd Greek head)
Temple restored
Priests and wealthy in Jerusalem apostatize and remake the city into a Greek city
True High Priest, from Zadok line, slain (Onias III)
Oppression by Antiochus IV Epiphanes
Deliverance by priests of the house of Hashmon, including Judas Maccabeas
Son of Onias III not made High Priest -- no more true High Priests

Hasmoneans make themselves High Priests and Kings
- III:4 Senatorial Rome (Daniel's 4th Greek head) extends protection
Gradual development of:
Sadducees --aristocrats and priests, often compromisers with Greek ideas
Pharisees --faithful believers

Essenes --dropouts who reject Temple
Hasmonean Kings generally persecute the faithful
Civil war between Hasmonean claimants to the throne breaks out

Senatorial Rome invited to settle matters; Pompey arrives in 63 BC
Rome puts Idumean (Edomite) kings in charge :

Antipater
Herod the Great

IV. Imperial Rome (Octavian; Augustus) conquers the area (Daniel's 4th Beast)

I. The Septuagint, or LXX

A. Jews in Egypt

1. Days of Jeremiah
 2. By the first century AD, over a million
 3. Earlier version of Jeremiah
 4. Elephantine Papyri
- a. Probably settled in Jeremiah's day
- b. Jewish mercenaries at garrison
- c. Syncretists: worshipped Yahweh and other gods

B. The translation

1. In Alexandria
2. The legend: commissioned for Library, completed miraculously in 72 days.
3. The likely truth: translated by various men, over time, for Jewish community.
4. In existence by 200 BC, so probably around 250 BC.
5. Importance:
 - a. Helps us understand some NT words and how they may correspond to OT Hebrew words.
 - b. Some NT writers seem to quote from it.
 - c. When knowledge of Hebrew was lost for a long time in the early church, was the OT of the Church.
 - d. Included the Apocrypha mixed in.
 - e. Numbers the Psalms differently, and this is followed by the RC and EO churches.

II. The Apocrypha

- A. Writings deemed of enough spiritual importance to be included in the LXX.
- B. Jews always knew they were uninspired.
- C. Used by the Church in a general way until the Reformation as partly authoritative.
- D. Rejected as authoritative in any sense by Luther and then by all Reformers.
 - Reformation Bibles put them together as a separate group and published them between the testaments.
- E. Rome reacted by declaring them fully authoritative, but called them "deutero-canonical," of secondary status.
- F. Mostly very good pre-Christian religious literature.
- G. The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version, expanded edition.

Edifying fiction:

Daniel and Susanna

Daniel, Bel, and the Dragon

Judith

Tobit

Pseudo-Historical works:

The Prayer of Manasseh - not included by Rome

- a very good penitential prayer

Baruch

- I. Historical introduction, much like end of 2 Kings.
- II. Prayer of repentance, much like Ezra 9.
- III. Praise of wisdom, much like parts of Job and Proverbs.
- IV. Encouragement to hope in the future, much like parts of Jeremiah and other prophets

Letter of Jeremiah

- attacks the false gods of Baby Ion
- probably around 300 BC as a warning against syncretism

1 Esdras - not included by Rome in Bible

- also called 3 Ezra
- retells the book of Ezra with some additions

Additions to Esther

- inserts prayers and visions into Esther, to make up for the lack of any mention of God in that book.
- justifies Mordecai's disobedience.

Historical propaganda:

1 Maccabees

- a political tract designed to justify the Hasmonean-Maccabean usurpation of the High Priesthood and kingship, presenting them as new Davids who are faithful to God, write psalms, etc.
- provides some useful historical information, but with a definite and ungodly slant.

2 Maccabees

- a summary of a much longer work, now lost.
- provides a much more accurate view of how the apostasy of the Jews brought down God's judgment through Antiochus Epiphanes.
- focuses on the Temple, its ruin by the Jews and then by Antiochus, and its restoration.

3 Maccabees - not originally listed by Jews or included by Rome

- not about the Maccabees at all.
- describes an earlier event, when the Greek-Egyptian ruler Ptolemy IV Philopater attempted to enter the Temple, was repulsed, and then attacked the Jews in Egypt as a result. Eleazar, an aged priest, prays, and Ptolemy is converted and turns to favor the Jews of Egypt
- an orthodox work designed to encourage Egyptian Jews to remain faithful.

Greek-influenced philosophy:

4 Maccabees - not originally listed by Jews or included by Rome, but much admired in Eastern Christianity

- uses the Maccabean events as a springboard for stoic philosophical ideas.

Orthodox Jewish wisdom:

Wisdom of Solomon, or Wisdom

- a devout work by an orthodox Alexandrian Jew.
- draws some from Greek ideas, but absorbs them in a Biblical view of wisdom

Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Ben Sirach, or Sirach

- "The Church Book" -- most important book for the Church, most used by the Church historically.
- most of it is proverbs; ch. 26
- helpful description of Temple worship, ch. 50
- note 50:22-24; Trinity Hymnal 86

And now bless the God of all,
who in every way does great things;
Who exalts our days from birth,
and deals with us according to His mercy.
May He give us gladness of heart,
and grant that peace may be in our days in Israel,
as in the days of old.
May He entrust us to His mercy.
And let Him deliver us all our days.

Apocalyptic:

2 Esdras -not originally listed by Jews or included by Rome

- also called 4 Ezra
- probably after the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70
- denounces Babylon, meaning Rome
- visions by the angel Uriel about mysteries of God's providence

Hymns:

The Prayer of Azariah

The Song of the Three Children

- two wonderful hymns sung by most of the Christian Churches

III. Pseudepigraphical Writings

- A. " Pseud " = false, "epigrapha" = writing. Writings false ascribed to Biblical authors.
- B. Inter-testamental writings that have never been used by Jews or Christians in any kind of authoritative way.
- C. *The Lost Books of the Bible*

Apocalyptic:

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The Book of Enoch	The Prophecy of Jeremiah
The Secrets of Enoch	The Ascension of Isaiah
The Apocalypse of Baruch	The Apocalypse of Elijah
The Rest of the Words of Baruch	The Apocalypse of Zephaniah
The Assumption of Moses	The Apocalypse of Ezra
A Revelation of Moses	The Sibylline Oracles -some of these are early Christian works

Legendary:

The Testament of Adam	The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
The Book of Jubilees - Genesis retold	The Life of Asenath
The Testament of Abraham	The Testament of Job
The Testament of Isaac	The Testament of Solomon
The Testament of Jacob	The Book of Noah
The Apocalypse of Abraham	The Penitence of Jannes and Jambres

Poetical:

The Psalms of Solomon
 Psalm 151 (by "David"), other apocryphal psalms

Didactic:

The Magical Books of Moses
 The Story of Achiacharus, cupbearer to Esarhaddon, king of Assyria

V. Other Jewish Writings of Interest

The Letter of Aristeas
 - gives the mythical account of how the LXX was written

The Works of Philo of Alexandria -writings of a Jewish Platonist
 - contemporary of Jesus and Paul

The Works of Flavius Josephus
 - younger contemporary of Jesus and disciples
 - priest
 - came to see the Roman destruction of Jerusalem as just punishment for her sins
 - *The Jewish War*
 - *Antiquities of the Jews*

Targums
 - Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible

Dead Sea Scrolls
 - Essene literature from the Qumran community

- Essenes rejected the Temple because it was ruled by the "wicked priest"
- The War Scroll, or Rule for the Final War, or War of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness -- apocalyptic expectation that God would come and set things right and put the Jews on top
- The Temple Scroll -- description of how the Temple really should be, pretending to be laws dictated to Moses by Yahweh.
- many copies of various OT books and other material
- of interest to scholars, but of no value in understanding the NT, since Jesus had no interest in people who drop out of God's world.

The Mishnah

- post-AD 70 collection of the Oral Law
- helps us understand somewhat the situation in Judaism in the time of Jesus and the Apostles

The Talmuds

- two collections of conversations among rabbis about the meaning of the Mishnah
- Jerusalem Talmud
- Babylonian Talmud

Parties, Sects, and Beliefs of the Jews

I. Sadducees

- A. In some ways descendants of the Hellenizers of the days before Antiochus Epiphanes, the priests and aristocrats of Jerusalem.
- B. But no longer Hellenizers.
- C. Limited to aristocrats and largely focused in Jerusalem, not in the outlying areas. Wealthy, educated, big-city types. Think Cavaliers as over against Puritans.
- D. Most priests were Sadducees.
- E. Beliefs, as best we can tell:
 1. Accepted only the first five books.
 2. Viewed the rest of the Scriptures as secondary.
 3. Had no interest in the developing Oral Law of the Pharisees.
 4. Supplemented the "books of Moses" with ideas from philosophy.
 5. Did not believe in physical resurrection.
 6. Stressed Temple activity.
- F. In fact, however, we don't know much about them.

II. Scribes or Lawyers or "Teachers of the Law"

- A. Experts in the Scriptures and its Law, and teachers of it.
- B. Levites, then "schools of the prophets," the Ezra the Scribe (Neh. 8:9).
- C. Formed the synagogues as schools of the Scriptures.
- D. Made their money by being experts in writing, writing contracts for-people, knowing other languages, and the like.

III. Rabbis

- A. Means "great one" and hence "Master."
- B. Used for scribes of distinction (Mt. 23:7f.).

IV. Sanhedrin (Tribunal)

- A. Local and larger councils of judges.
- B. Great Sanhedrin over all Jews, consisted of 70 members.
- C. Had mostly religious but also some civil authority.
- D. In Deuteronomy, Levite and elders sat together to judge. Sanhedrin is extension of this arrangement.
- E. The Great Sanhedrin, in Jerusalem, consisted mostly of Sadducees and scribes.

V. Herods

- A. A powerful clan of Edomites (Idumeans).
- B. Idumeans had been circumcised and become Jews.
- C. Put in power by Rome.
- D. Through their extended family, pretty much controlled political affairs in Jewry.
- E. Were very much a buffer between Rome and the Jews, and thus generally favored by many Jews as the lesser of two evils.

VI. Herodians

- A. A party that favored Herodian rule over Roman rule. Saw the (circumcised) Herods as legitimate kings of Jewry. "More of Herod, less of Caesar."
- B. Joined with the Pharisees to ask Jesus if it was okay to pay tax to Caesar.
- C. Jesus presented Himself as the True King. In the Gospels, this is pointed against Herod primarily, not against Caesar. This was a grave political offense to the Herodians who saw the Herods as a bulwark against direct Roman imperial rule.

VII. Zealots -men who favored the overthrow of Rome by force.

- A. In AD 6, the Herodian ruler Archelaus was set aside by Rome, and the area came directly under Roman rule. Imperial taxes had to be raised, and a Roman army arrived to reorganize Palestine. This provoked a revolt under Judas the Galilean, which was crushed. (Acts 5:37)
- B. As long as the area was under Jewish (Herodian) kings, there was no rebellion and no Zealot party. There were no Zealots in the Gospel period.
- C. "Simon the Zealot" simply means "Simon the Enthusiastic One."
- D. After King Herod Agrippa died in AD 44, the Romans placed the whole area directly under Roman rule. A party of Zealots arose that fomented rebellion, finally leading to the Jewish-Roman War of the late AD 60s, and to the destruction of Jerusalem.

VIII. Tax Collectors

- A. Tax farmers who gathered taxes for Herods and sometimes for Romans.
- B. Viewed negatively by the people not because they worked for Herods and Romans, but because they so often abused their position and cheated the people.
- C. Tax farmers were also allowed to charge interest on taxes, in violation of the Law of God (Dt. 23:19-20), which put them in the category of Sinners.

IX. Sinners

- A. Sometimes thought to be all the people who did not measure up to the high standards of the Pharisees.
- B. In reality, people who violated the basic Laws of God and showed no interest in serving Him: tax farmers, prostitutes, etc.

X. Pharisees

- A. Came from the Hasideans ("loyal ones") who kept the Law at the time of the apostasy of Jerusalem in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes and thereafter.
- B. After the usurpation of the High Priesthood and Kingship by the Hasmoneans, divided into two groups.
- C. Essenes dropped out of society waiting for God to act.
- D. Pharisees stayed in and witnessed for God.
- E. *The Pharisees are the good guys at the time of Jesus. Their sin was not in bad theology or primarily in bad teaching, but in rejecting Jesus.*
- F. Beliefs:
 - 1. Downplayed Temple activity in favor of individual piety and obedience to God.
 - 2. Followed the Prophets, who also stressed piety in times when the Temple ritual had become corrupt.

3. Accepted all the Scripture as amplifications of Torah (the law of Moses).
4. Made new applications that they tended to see as binding on those seeking true holiness.
5. Came increasingly to see these new applications as revelations from God, the Oral Law, which was then backdated to the time of Moses. This is only beginning in Jesus' day, and is what is meant by the "traditions of the fathers."
6. Sought to apply a notion of a "priesthood of all believers. II Unlike the Sadducees and the dropout Essenes, lived among the people and sought to disciple them to the Lord.
 - a. Through acts of kindness and charity.
 - b. But also through coming up with Temple-like rituals that people should observe in daily life, like the washing of cups and other things. Discipleship techniques.
 - c. Unlike the Easy Yoke of God's Torah Law, these new regulations were too heavy to bear, and thus the Pharisees often became hypocrites in practice.
 - d. Tended to make their own new applications more important than actual Torah-Law teaching (Mt. 23:23; Mk. 7:9-13). The discipleship techniques themselves became more important than what those techniques were supposed to teach.
- G. Pharisees and Jesus
 1. True believers tended to be Pharisees, which is why Jesus spent His time with them.
 2. Often Jesus accepted invitations to dine with Pharisees.
 3. Pharisees argued about whether to accept Jesus or not (John 9:16).
 4. Jesus did not attack them, but gradually they began to attack Him because of
 - a. His claim to be the Messiah, the bringer of the Final Age, *because* of His claim to be bringing a New Law that would supersede the Old Law.
 - b. His difference with them over the applications of the Old Law, *because* of His claim to be the Prophet and His claim that they had missed the mark.
 5. Even at the end, when hostility had reached its peak, Jesus still said that their teaching was fundamentally right (Mt. 23:3).

XI. Myths about Jewish Belief at the time of Jesus

- A. That the Jews were looking for a Messiah who would setup a new Jewish World Empire, like the Roman Empire.
Fact: The Jews were looking for a Messiah who would usher in a time of world faithfulness and peace, or else end history altogether. Rome would be replaced, but not with anything like a Jewish Roman Empire.
- B. That the Jews hated Gentiles.
Fact: The Jews wanted Gentiles saved, and evangelized among them all the time. They encouraged (wrongly) Gentiles to be circumcised and become Jews, and then the Pharisees wanted them to become "first-class, highly-committed" Jews like themselves.
- C. That the Jews (or Pharisees) believed in works salvation by keeping the Law.
Fact: The idea of earning salvation is not common. The Law is God's perfect wisdom for living one's life after one has accepted the free gift of salvation.

XII. The Jews and the Law

- A. The Scriptures as God's Word were permanent and unchanging. Pharisees and Sadducees differed over what was permanent, but both agreed on this point.
- B. The notion that the Law was temporary, for children, and pointed to a future time when it would be superseded, was unthinkable and scandalous.
- C. Jesus' "attack" on the Law in the Sermon on the Mount is not merely on false applications and additions, but on the Law itself as something unchanging.
- D. Jesus said that the Law pointed beyond itself to a future time when it would be "fulfilled" and transformed into something new.
- E. Jesus agreed with the Pharisees that the Law needed new applications, but said that those new applications could only be seen in and through Him. The Pharisees were sometimes if not often making the wrong "deductions" from the Law.

XIII. Salvation

- A. The Jews did not believe you earned your way to salvation by merits and good works.

- B. They believed in salvation by free grace, which those elected to salvation should embrace by faith and faithfulness.
- C. The issue between Jesus and the Jews, between Paul and the Jews, was not over the method of salvation, not the "ordo salutis." Theologians, laboring in doctrinal areas, often miss this point.
- D. The issue was Jesus Himself.
- E. The issue was: "Who is God"?
- F. The false Jews had made Satan god. They evangelized for hell. Their synagogues were captained by demons. They had turned the world over to Satan, as Satan said to Jesus.
- G. Jesus said that they had been elected by Satan, saved by Satan, were being justified by faith in Satan, and were faithfully following Satan. Everything else flowed from the fact that their father was Satan.
- H. If you have the wrong god, then you will misread the Scriptures and make wrong applications from them.
- I. If you have Satan for your god in your heart, then even though you *teach* good theology (like the Pharisees), in your heart you will be proud and believe in your own good deeds (like many of the Pharisees). You will be a hypocrite.
- J. The situation is "mixed" until Jesus comes. Any given Pharisee would tell you the same thing as any other Pharisee. In their hearts, though, some were true believers in Yahweh, while others were sons of Satan. Jesus exposed hearts, and sorted out Israel. Some received Him gladly. For some it took time to realize who He was and what His coming meant. Some rejected Him instantly, but came around later on. Some accepted Him and later rejected Him. Some rejected Him all along.
- K. This sorting process starts again at Pentecost, and ended in AD 70. By that time, "all (true) Israel" had been saved, and the rest were destroyed.
- L. Having rejected Jesus, the Jews completed the process of absolutizing the Old Law and of absolutizing the Oral Law.