

BIBLE MINOR - NEW TESTAMENT LITERATURE

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Session Interlude: 2nd Temple Period (part 2) (48:32)

Historical Review: Assyria - Babylon - Persia - Alexander the Great - Rome

Historical Events:

- 722 B.C. The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel.
- 586 B.C. The Babylonians conquered the southern kingdom of Judah.
- 539 B.C. The Persians led by Cyrus the Great took over the Babylonians.
- 356-323 B.C. Alexander the Great dismantles the Persian Empire.
Israel becomes a political and geographical football between
The Ptolemaic Empire of North Africa and the Seleucid Empire.
- 175 B.C. Emperor Antiochus IV takes control of Israel
and desires to unite all his empires according to custom, language
and religion. The Jewish people get in the way of that so he
makes it illegal to perform circumcisions, read the law publicly,
and observe the Sabbath
- 167-63 B.C. The Maccabean Revolt. The Jewish people fight back. Purify the
temple - Hanukkah
- 63 B.C. - A.D. 135 The dominance of the Roman Empire, now in charge of Israel.

II. Intertestamental literature (i.e., Second Temple literature).

- A. The Jewish Scriptures (Hebrew scrolls) began to be translated into Greek (i.e., the Septuagint or LXX, and Old Greek texts) around 250 B.C.
As Jewish people lived outside of Israel their ability to speak Hebrew began to die.
- B. Some Jewish literature was so well known and appreciated that it became the Apocrypha found in Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Bibles but did not become part of the Christian Canon.
1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Prayer of Azariah, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasseh, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees.
- C. The Pseudepigrapha is a modern collection of other ancient Jewish literature written at this time.
Epistle to the Ephesians, Epistle to the Colossians, Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, First Epistle to Timothy, Second Epistle to Timothy, and Epistle to Titus. Book of Enoch - quoted in Jude 1:9.
Valued by Jewish people but not considered inspired Scripture.
Dead Sea Scrolls found in 1947, included 900 manuscripts, 1/3 biblical.

D. Significant features of Jewish literature:

1. Jews living outside of Israel did not speak Hebrew and, therefore, read the Septuagint/OG (Old Greek).
2. Jewish literature regularly describes how a faithful Jew is to live in light of pagan idolatry and immorality.
3. Jewish literature expected God to deliver Israel by defeating their enemies and providing a messiah (i.e., a king).

The Old Testament ends with the expectations of what God was going to do for the Jewish people: Provide them a king (i.e. Davidic heir), independence in their own land, His presence via a temple, and give them the ability to obey Him by the Holy Spirit and a new heart.

Why is the Apocrypha not included in the Christian Bible?

It's only since the Reformation (1517) that the omission of the Apocrypha books occurred. As early as the second century, we see evidence that the early church was writing manuscripts of the Gospels and compiling Paul's letters. The early churches were passing on authoritative literature besides the OT (within 100 years of Paul's life) that was being read and preached. We all agree on the 39 books in the OT and 27 in the NT.

What was the criteria for the Protestant Bible?

There wasn't a formal "criteria" in place. Basically, no Jewish group accepted any of the other books as God's word and none of them were generally accepted as canonical or authoritative. We favor those that have claims to apostolic authority.

III. Israel in the first century A.D. (Jesus's day).

- A. Synagogues developed because most Jews were separated geographically from Temple worship and animal sacrifices.
- B. Even though most Jews lived outside of Israel, they distinguished themselves from Gentiles through circumcision, Sabbath worship, and table fellowship (eating ritually clean foods - seen as early as Daniel). This created social division among Gentiles.
- C. Different responses to Hasmonean and foreign rule:
 1. Sadducees - supported the Hellenizing of Jewish culture; the rich and elite in Jewish society. (Wanted to assimilate Jews into Gentile/Greek culture)

2. Pharisees - conservative, Mosaic Law abiding teachers of the day who arose in response to the laxness of the Hasmonean rulers. They were blinded by their attempts at self-righteousness.
3. Zealots - believed that God would enable them to overthrow Rome and bring in the promises of God through military might; officially formed after Jesus's resurrection. (Simon the Zealot: Matthew 10:4; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13) 60 A.D. started killing the Romans and their own people who were sympathizers with Rome (tax collectors)
4. Essenes - similar to the Pharisees, they formed as a reaction to the increased Hasmonean failure; they believed Israel had lost her way and that God would only save a small remnant who were faithful (i.e., their group).
Believed the Jerusalem temple was corrupted and they needed to move outside the city limits. They formed the Qumran community where Dead Sea Scrolls were found. Sectarian: Distinction from Judaism even before Christianity.
5. "The people of the land" - (Hebrew am ha'aretz) the vast majority of people fell into this category and were waiting for God to act.

I. What is the NT canon?

- A. Remember the OT is comprised of three parts: Torah, Nevi'im (the prophets), and Ketuvim (the writings).
In the early church, books had not been invented. Christians were taking scrolls and forming them into books in the first, second and third A.D.'s
- B. The early church appears to have quickly formulated a canon which comprises most of the books we have in our modern NT.
- C. Similar to the OT, the NT seems to have been grouped in parts; the Gospels, Paul's letter collection (plus Hebrews), Acts plus the general epistles, and the Revelation to John.
Manuscript evidence: pieces of actual manuscripts that we can find.

II. What are the Gospels? Portraits of Jesus Christ.

Each author of the Gospel is presenting Jesus to you in a certain perspective.

This means that each of the four Gospel writers is trying to persuade you of something about Jesus that the other one may be discussing, but isn't making it their focal point.

- A. Ancient Greek biographies - the general form of each gospel generally reflects the common ancient genre of biography.
- B. The gospels are intended to be read in light of the Old Testament.
- C. The gospels are transformative not merely informative. Not mere history.
- D. The gospels are testimony, i.e., they are to be read as a blending of fact and interpretation.
- E. The Synoptic gospels and John's gospel:
 - 1. The content and wording overlap of Mark, Matthew, and Luke leads interpreters to see these gospels as being dependent; thus, they are called the synoptic gospels.
 - 2. John's gospel is believed to be the last one written, and although he may be aware of the other gospels, he has not used them as overt sources.

C. By reading the individual gospels as narrative and applying a narrative analysis, we can follow the author's textual pointers to the intended meaning.

- 1. Narratives are historical. Telling us events that actually happened.
- 2. Narratives are rhetorical - they seek to persuade you to think differently about Jesus.
- 3. Narratives are intentionally theological - they prompt readers to think beyond the historical account to how the message might be applied.
They teach us who God is, who humans are, and how God and humans are supposed to relate.
- 4. Typically the author connects narratives together (which may not be chronological) in order to subtly communicate a point; therefore, reading each narrative scene in light of the surrounding narratives is critical. In other words, each narrative is episonic - interconnected.