

What are Protestants Missing?

The Apocrypha
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1. This is the first in a series of four presentations that will look at Jewish literature written between the end of events in the Old Testament and the writing of the New Testament.
2. These writings help to bridge the large historical and theological gap between the Old and New Testaments.
3. As one author writes: **“The fact is that the atmosphere in which the New Testament is written is in large part the product of the period between the testaments, and no amount of study of the Old Testament can solely explain it.”** Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* at 9.
4. Today, we will talk about the Apocrypha, books included in the Bibles of Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians but omitted from most Protestant Bibles.
5. Next week we will look at a collection of Jewish writings called Pseudepigrapha, one of which is actually quoted in the New Testament and several of which were relied upon by New Testament writers.
6. In the third week, we will look at the Dead Sea Scrolls, which have shed enormous light on Jewish beliefs at the time of Jesus and show great similarities to many Christian beliefs.
7. Finally we will look at the writings of Jewish contemporaries of Jesus and the New Testament writers, including Philo and Josephus.
8. Over the course of this series, we will see that the New Testament and Christian teachings draw a lot more on Jewish ideas and Jewish expressions than most Christians realize.

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1. Many Christians assume the Bible tells a continuous story, starting with creation in *Genesis* and ending with predictions of the end of time in *Revelation*.
2. In fact, the Bible, especially the one used by most Protestants, does not tell a continuous story.

3. The events of the Protestant Old Testament end in about 400 B.C., when the land of Israel was controlled by the Persians.
4. Its residents spoke Hebrew.

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1. When the New Testament begins, Israel was under the control of the Romans and many of its residents spoke Greek.
2. In the approximately 430 years between the end of the times reflected in the Protestant Old Testament and events of the New Testament, profound changes had taken place in Jewish thought, many the result of the Jews exposure to Persian and Greek ideas.
3. For example, the Old Testament is virtually silent about life after death, but by the time of Jesus bodily resurrection at the end of time had been accepted by large segments of the Jewish population.
4. The Old Testament makes no explicit claims to a coming Messiah, but by the time of Jesus most Jews were eagerly awaiting a Messiah whose presence they thought would lead to that resurrection.
5. The idea of a final judgment, so important to the teachings of the New Testament, is almost entirely missing from the Old Testament, as is the concept of hell as a place of punishment and heaven as a place of reward.
6. And, by the time of the New Testament, the source of evil in the world had moved from an all-powerful God to legions of demons acting under the control of Satan, an idea foreign to the Protestant Old Testament.

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1. In 1914, a well-known Protestant theologian named H. A. Ironside wrote: **“It is a significant fact that in all the long years of the four silent centuries we have had before us, not so much as a psalm or any other literary product has come down to us that is worthy to be compared with the precious treasures of the Old Testament.”** Ironside, *The 400 Silent Years* at 111.
2. But if God was silent about the Jews between the testaments, Jewish writers were not silent about God.
3. A large quantity of Jewish writings shows a continuous evolution of Jewish thought during the years before the time of the writing of the New Testament, almost entirely bridging the theological gaps between the testaments.

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1. *Nehemiah* and *Ezra* describe the last events in the Protestant Old Testament, the final return of the Jews from their exile in Babylon in about 400 B.C.
2. Beginning in about 332 B.C., Greek forces under Alexander the Great conquered Persia and the lands previously controlled by it, including what is now Israel.
3. Unlike the Persians, the Greeks imposed their culture and language.
4. **“Wherever he went, [Alexander] established cities in which the Greek language, culture and institutions were superimposed upon the native populations.”**
Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 76.
5. In 331 B.C., Alexander founded Alexandria, Egypt, which became home to a large number of Jews, who were granted greater freedom of worship there than in other areas under Greek control.
6. Over time, the Jews in Alexandria began speaking Greek.

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1. Sometime in the third century B.C., scholars in Alexandria began translating the books of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek.
2. The translation became known as the Septuagint, from the Latin word meaning “seventy,” after a popular story that the translation of the first five books had been generated by 72 scholars.

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1. Eventually the Septuagint, often abbreviated by the Roman Numerals “LXX” for seventy, came to include Greek translations of all the books of the Hebrew Scriptures.
2. It also included a number of Jewish writings written after 400 B.C. that collectively became known as the Apocrypha, a word originally meaning “hidden.”
3. By the time of Jesus, the Septuagint, including the Apocrypha, was in widespread use among Greek-speaking Jews no matter where they were located.
4. All the writers of the New Testament wrote in Greek.
5. As a result, virtually all quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures that appear in the New Testament are based on the Septuagint translations.

6. The Septuagint, including the Apocrypha, was the only Bible used by early Christians, many of whom were unfamiliar with Hebrew.

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1. Early church leaders, familiar with only the Septuagint, considered the Apocrypha part of the Old Testament.
2. For example, **“Augustine considered the Old Testament to be comprised of 45 books, including Tobit, Judith, and 1 and 2 Maccabees, Ecclesiasticus, and Wisdom.”** Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* at 93.

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1. As we will discuss more in the fourth presentation, Judaism and Christianity look so different today not only because Christians rejected Jewish thinking – in the late first century Jews rejected some of their own prior thinking.
2. Seeing that the Septuagint and the Apocrypha were being used by Christians, in about the second century **“the Jews abandoned the use of the Greek Septuagint, and this circulated henceforth solely among the Christians.”** Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* at 175.
3. In about 135 A.D., a rabbi said that books of the Apocrypha, all written by Jews, were **“those of heretics.”** Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* at 300.
4. Henceforth, authentic Hebrew Scriptures called the Tanakh came to be seen as only those books written in Hebrew before 400 B.C., which excluded the Apocrypha.
5. Because *Daniel* was thought at the time to have been written during the exile, it was included in the Jewish canon even though most scholars today believe it was written in about 164 B.C. by unknown authors seeking to pass the work off as that of Daniel.

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1. When Jerome created the Vulgate, a Latin Bible, in the fourth century, he included some books of the Apocrypha, but separated them from his translation of the Hebrew Scriptures accepted as authoritative at the time by Jews.
2. Over time, Latin translations of other books of the Apocrypha became part of many Christian Bibles.
3. As one author states: **“Thus, during the Middle Ages there circulated throughout Europe manuscripts of the Latin Bible which contained the Apocryphal**

books mingled with the [translations of the Hebrew Scriptures].” Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* at 179.

4. For Christians during this period, books such as *Tobit*, *Wisdom* and *1* and *2 Maccabees*, were considered part of their Old Testaments.

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1. That view of the Apocrypha changed beginning in the early sixteenth century, when Martin Luther was confronted by church leaders with *2 Maccabees* 12:43 - 45 as support for their teachings about purgatory and prayers for the dead.

2. Because Luther rejected purgatory and prayers for the dead, but accepted the truth of Scripture, he concluded that *2 Maccabees*, which had been rejected by the Jews at least in part because of its use by Christians, should not be relied upon by Christians either.

3. And because *Tobit* and other books of the Apocrypha expressly teach salvation by works, which Luther also rejected, he concluded that none of the books of the Apocrypha were authoritative.

4. So, when Luther published his German translation of the Bible, he put the seven most popular books of the Apocrypha -- *Tobit*, *Judith*, *1* and *2 Maccabees*, *Wisdom*, *Sirach* and *Baruch* – in an appendix sandwiched between the Old and New Testaments.

5. He prefaced the appendix as follows: **“Apocrypha – that is, books which are not held equal to the Holy Scriptures, and yet are profitable and good to read.”**

6. Today, most Protestant Bibles omit from their Old Testaments any books that are not also part of the Jewish canon, thereby excluding the Apocrypha.

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1. Responding to Protestant claims that the books of the Apocrypha were not Holy Scripture, a session of the Council of Trent held by Roman Catholics in 1546 declared the seven books of the Apocrypha singled out by Luther to be sacred and canonical.

2. Those books are part of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles.

3. Those Bibles also include additions to *Esther* and *Daniel* that are not included in Protestant Bibles.

4. Today, we will look at five books of the Apocrypha that are of greatest importance in understanding the evolution of Jewish thought between the Old and New Testaments – *Tobit*, *Sirach*, *1* and *2 Maccabees* and *Wisdom*.

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1. *Tobit* is generally considered the oldest book of the Apocrypha, written by an unknown Jewish author in the third century B.C.
2. Several copies of *Tobit* were discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls, indicating that it was in circulation during the time of Jesus.
3. Copies were found in both Hebrew and Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke.
4. *Tobit* tells a complex story about a man named Tobit and his family, Jews living in Galilee in the eighth century B.C. when the Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians and its people taken captive to Nineveh.
5. Everyone agrees that the story is fanciful, but its telling has had an effect on Jewish, Christian and even Islamic beliefs.

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1. For example, an angel gave the following advice to Tobit and his son: **“Prayer with fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold.”** *Tobit* 12:8.
2. Based on this advice, almsgiving, praying, and fasting came to be called the **“three pillars of Judaism.”** Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* at 38.
3. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus identified these same three pillars -- almsgiving, praying and fasting -- as the **“acts of righteousness”** that his Jewish followers should perform. *Matthew* 6:1 – 18.
4. Jesus added to *Tobit’s* three pillars the requirement that these **“acts of righteousness”** be done in secret and not boastfully. *Matthew* 6:1.
5. Immediately after discussing the three pillars, Jesus, like *Tobit’s* angel, admonished his followers not to **“store up for yourselves treasures on earth.”** *Matthew* 6:19.
6. The word translated as **“righteousness”** is the same in both the Sermon on the Mount and *Tobit*, causing one author to conclude that *Tobit* **“may have been known to Jesus.”** Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* at 170.
7. *Tobit’s* “pillars of Judaism” – almsgiving, prayer and fasting -- became three of the five “pillars of Islam.”

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1. When presented with a bountiful feast on Pentecost, the Jewish Festival of Weeks, Tobit told his son: **“Go, my child, and bring whatever poor person you may find of our people among the exiles in Nineveh, who is wholeheartedly mindful of God, and he shall eat together with me.”** *Tobit 2:2.*
2. This popular story might have been the inspiration for Jesus’ recommendation that **“when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed.”** *Luke 14:13 – 14.*

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1. One of the best-known sayings of Jesus also comes from the Sermon on the Mount: **“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”** *Matthew 7:12.*
2. A comparable sentiment is not expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures.
3. In giving advice to his son, Tobit said: **“And what you hate, do not do to anyone.”** *Tobit 4:15.*
4. The statement of Jesus is positive and not negative, but the basic idea is found in *Tobit.*

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1. *Tobit* is also an early, perhaps the earliest, source for Jewish beliefs in an apocalyptic final judgment at the end of time.
2. On his death bed, Tobit predicted a **“period when the times of fulfillment shall come”** and **“the temple of God will be rebuilt”** in Jerusalem. *Tobit 14:5.*
3. At that time, those who **“are truly mindful of God”** will **“live in safety forever in the land of Abraham,”** **“but those who commit sin and injustice will vanish from all the earth.”** *Tobit 14:7.*
4. Tobit described his vision of a rebuilt Jerusalem at this time of fulfillment: **“The gates of Jerusalem will be built with sapphire and emerald. The towers of Jerusalem will be built with gold, and their battlements with pure gold. The streets of Jerusalem will be paved with ruby and with stones of Ophir.”** *Tobit 13:16.*
5. This description is very similar to the vision of the **“new Jerusalem”** described in *Revelation 21: 18 – 21.*

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1. One author states: **“It is chiefly with reference to angels and demons that the book of Tobit takes its place as a valuable source of our knowledge of the development of doctrine.”** Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* at 38.
2. In the Hebrew Scriptures written before the exile, demons and evil spirits are controlled by God.
3. For example, *1 Samuel* 16:14 states: **“Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.”**
4. Similarly, in *2 Kings* 22:21 – 22, God directed a **“lying spirit”** to deceive King Ahab.
5. *Tobit* describes a wicked demon named “Asmodeus,” who opposes God and his angels, a new concept in Jewish thought. *Tobit* 3:8, 17.
6. Asmodeus is the same as Aeshma-daeva, the wicked demon of Zoroastrianism who opposed God and his angels, which the Jews learned about from the Persians.
7. *Tobit’s* description of evil demons opposing God was elaborated in the Pseudepigrapha that we will discuss next week and eventually became the view of New Testament writers and of many Christians today.

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1. *Tobit* describes a scene in which an angel announces: **“I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand ready and enter before the glory of the Lord.”** *Tobit* 12:15.
2. Although the Hebrew Scriptures mention unnamed angels, they describe **“no such [favored] category of angelic beings, and certainly not of seven archangels in the presence of God.”** Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 70.
3. *Revelation* reports a vision in which **“the seven spirits of God”** are before his throne. *Revelation* 4:5.
4. Some scholars believe that the idea of seven named angels before the throne of God, like the demon Asmodeus, was derived from Zoroastrianism.

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1. *Sirach*, another important book of the Apocrypha, is formally titled the *Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach* or *Wisdom of Ben Sira* and is sometimes called *Ecclesiasticus*.

2. *Sirach* is a book of sayings and sage advice, similar to *Proverbs*, written by a Jewish resident of Jerusalem named Ben Sira in about 200 B.C., shortly after the writing of *Tobit*.
3. “[D]uring the first half of the third century [A.D.], the Wisdom of Ben Sira seems to have been accepted unhesitatingly as sacred scripture by Christians.” Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* at 301.
4. Some of *Sirach*’s advice relates to such prosaic topics as how to act when “seated at the table of the great:” “Do not be greedy at it, and do not say, ‘How much food there is here’” “and do not chew greedily, or you will give offense.” *Sirach* 31:12, 16.
5. One *Sirach* passage states: “Do not give yourself over to sorrow, and do not distress yourself deliberately. A joyful heart is life itself, and rejoicing lengthens one’s life span.” *Sirach* 30:21 – 22.
6. This is similar to the advice Jesus gave his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?” *Luke* 12:22, 25.

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1. One teaching of Jesus that has no antecedent in the Hebrew Scriptures is addressing God as “Father” in prayers, as in “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” *Matthew* 6:9.
2. Many Protestants, not knowing about the Apocrypha, assume that Jesus was the first to teach praying to God as “Father.”
3. But *Sirach* offers this model prayer: “O Lord, Father and Master of my life, do not abandon me to their designs and do not let me fall because of them. . . . O Lord, Father and God of my life, do not give me haughty eyes, and remove all evil desire from me.” *Sirach* 23:1, 4 - 5.

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1. *Matthew*’s version of the Lord’s Prayer, included in the Sermon on the Mount, adds the following statement, not found in the *Luke* version: “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” *Matthew* 6:14.
2. *Sirach* has a very similar provision: “Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.” *Sirach* 28:2.

3. The resemblance of the Lord's Prayer to the prayer of *Sirach* suggests to some scholars **“that Jesus knew the writings of Ben Sira and could adapt them to his own teaching.”** Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 105.

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1. Jesus told a parable about a rich man who, having to build bigger barns to store his bounty, says proudly to himself: **“You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”** *Luke* 12:18 – 19.
2. God then said to him: **“You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”** *Luke* 12:20.
3. Many scholars see the foundations of this parable in *Sirach*: **“One becomes rich through diligence and self-denial, and the reward allotted to him is this: when he says, ‘I have found rest, and now I shall feast on my goods!’ he does not know how long it will be until he leaves them to others and dies.”** *Sirach* 11:18 – 19.

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1. Scholars also find evidence that New Testament authors used sayings from *Sirach* in their writings.
2. For example, *James* states: **“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”** *James* 1:19.
3. *James* is probably asking its readers to take note of this saying in *Sirach*: **“Be quick to hear, but deliberate in answering.”** *Sirach* 5:11.

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1. One of the common themes of Jesus is that **“many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first,”** which he tells the rich ruler who refused to sell his possessions and give them to the poor. *Matthew* 19:30.
2. Jesus' mother Mary similarly said that God **“has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.”** *Luke* 1:52.
3. These ideas of the rich being brought down and the poor lifted can be found in *Sirach*, which says: **“The Lord overthrows the thrones and enthrones the lowly in their place.”** *Sirach* 10:14.

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1. Scholars also see in *Sirach* important teachings about the Jewish personification of Wisdom that supported Christian conclusions that Jesus was the incarnation of God.

2. *Proverbs* says that Wisdom, **“created by [God] at the beginning of his work, was present as God created the universe and everything in it.”** *Proverbs* 8:22 – 31.
3. *Sirach* takes this idea one step further, giving Wisdom the power of salvation: **“Whoever holds [Wisdom] fast inherits glory, and the Lord blesses the places she enters. Those who serve her minister to the Holy One; the Lord loves those who love her.”** *Sirach* 44:13 – 14.
4. New Testament writers saw in *Sirach*’s description of Wisdom what they thought was a description of Jesus, so Jesus, like Wisdom, **“was with God in the beginning”** (*John* 1:2), a key conclusion underlying the Trinity.
5. As one author states: **“Paul, John and the author of Hebrews, in setting forth their understanding of Jesus, incorporated and adapted concepts found in the wisdom tradition of Israel, of which Sirach is a prime example.”** Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 101.

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1. The Hebrew Scriptures written before 400 B.C. contain no unambiguous statements about life after death.
2. Statements often used to support the idea of bodily resurrection, such as *Ezekiel* 37:5 – 6 and *Isaiah* 26:19, probably originally suggested the restoration of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and not the literal resurrection of human beings. Segal, *Life after Death* at 261.
3. That Jews in the early second century B.C. did not generally believe in bodily resurrection is made clear by a passage in *Sirach*, advising people to enjoy this life because there is nothing beyond the grave: **“Give, and take, and indulge yourself, because in Hades [the realm of the dead] one cannot look for luxury. All living beings become old like a garment, for the decree from of old is, ‘You must die!’”** *Sirach* 14:16.
4. For the author of *Sirach*, the timing or type of death provided God’s rewards and punishments without the need for an afterlife. Segal, *Life after Death* at 254 – 55.

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1. A change in belief about life after death came about just a few years after *Sirach*, as recounted in the Apocryphal books of *1* and *2 Maccabees*.
2. In about 176 B.C., Antiochus IV, the Syrian-Greek ruler of the land of Israel, outlawed circumcision, possessing Hebrew Scriptures and worshipping on the Sabbath, on penalty of death.

3. More devastating to the Jews, Antiochus erected an altar to Zeus in the Temple in Jerusalem, where pigs were then sacrificed.
4. Most scholars believe this period is *Daniel's* **“abomination that causes desolation”** in which **“the daily sacrifice is abolished.”** *Daniel* 9:27; 12:11.

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1. In about 167 B.C., Jews led by a family of rural priests revolted against the rule of Antiochus IV.
2. Led by Judah, nicknamed Maccabee, a word perhaps meaning hammer, the uprising became known as the revolt of the Maccabees.
3. Within three years, the Maccabees took control of Jerusalem, eventually leading to a period of Jewish independence known as the Hasmonean period that lasted until 63 B.C., when the area was captured by the Romans.
4. *1 Maccabees* is a detailed account of the revolt of the Maccabees and its causes, probably written in about 100 B.C.
5. It is largely historical and not theological.
6. As one author states: **“The anonymous author of 1 Maccabees avoids references to miracles, attributes no events to supernatural intervention, and does not mention the doctrine of resurrection.”** Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* at 119.
7. Christians considered *1 Maccabees* **“a part of the Old Testament canon throughout the Middle Ages.”** *Id.* at 122.
8. It was rejected by Martin Luther, in part because of its suggestion that works are important to salvation.

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1. The *Epistle of James*, which Martin Luther considered too Jewish because of its emphasis on works and not faith alone, drew its support from *1 Maccabees*.
2. To support his claim that **“a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone,”** the writer of *James* asks: **“Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?”** *James* 2:21, 24.
3. An almost identical rhetorical question was offered by Mattathias, the father of Judah the Maccabee, to his sons on his deathbed: **“Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness?”** *1 Maccabees* 2:51 -52.

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1. *2 Maccabees* also describes the events of the Maccabean revolt, but with less attention to facts and a lot more attention to theology and the supernatural than *1 Maccabees*.
2. *2 Maccabees* is best known for its unequivocal recognition of bodily resurrection of the dead at the end of time, a view rejected by *Sirach*.
3. The seventh chapter reports on seven brothers who willingly died for the re-establishment of Jewish laws.
4. As the third brother was about to be killed, **“he quickly put out his tongue and courageously stretched forth his hands, and said nobly, ‘I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again.’”** *2 Maccabees* 7:10 – 11.
5. When the fourth brother **“was near death, he said, ‘One cannot but choose to die at the hands of mortals and to cherish the hope God gives of being raised again by him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life!’”** *2 Maccabees* 7:14.

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1. It is possible that the writer of *2 Maccabees* took his views of the resurrection of the righteous from the eleventh and twelfth chapters of *Daniel*, which most scholars now believe was written **“during the crisis surrounding the Maccabean war.”** Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* at 55.
2. The unknown author of *Daniel* describes the plight of those who rose up against Antiochus IV, some of whom were **“not sincere:”** **“[T]hey will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered.”** *Daniel* 11:33, 34.
3. Giving comfort to the survivors of those who died for Jewish freedom, the author of *Daniel* writes: **“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”** *Daniel* 12:2.
4. Unlike *Daniel*, *2 Maccabees* provides the mechanism by which resurrection of the dead will occur.
5. The mother of the seven brothers encouraged their martyrdom, saying: **“[T]he Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of humankind and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws.”** *2 Maccabees* 7:22 – 23.
6. In other words, **“martyrs will be resurrected from nothing—even if the bodies of the martyrs are burned and their dust scattered — just as all human beings come originally from nothing and the universe itself was created from nothing.”** Segal, *Life After Death* at 270.

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1. By the time of Jesus, Pharisees, who looked to the Septuagint, including the Apocrypha, for guidance, accepted the resurrection of the dead as set out in *2 Maccabees*. *Acts* 23:8.
2. The New Testament *Epistle to the Hebrews*, written for a Jewish audience, bases this belief on the *2 Maccabees*' story of the seven martyred brothers and their mother: **“Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection.”** *Hebrews* 11:35.
3. On the other hand, by the time of Jesus, the Sadducees, who looked exclusively to the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures, continued to reject resurrection. *Acts* 23:8.

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1. *2 Maccabees* provides the basis for the Roman Catholic practice of praying for the dead, which Protestants since Luther have rejected.
2. Like the writer of *Daniel*, the leader of the Maccabees concluded that some who had died in battle had not been sincerely Jewish because they were wearing forbidden tokens of idols. *2 Maccabees* 12:40.
3. He then took up an offering and prayed for them, with the author explaining: **“For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, so that they might be delivered from their sin.”** *2 Maccabees* 12:44 – 45.
4. This passage is also the basis for the Roman Catholic belief in purgatory, an intermediate state between heaven and hell where prayers for the dead can be useful.

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1. Although claimed to have been written by King Solomon, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, usually called simply *Wisdom*, was written sometime in the first century B.C. by a Jewish writer with significant knowledge of Greek philosophy.
2. Most Christians identify the serpent as Satan. *Revelation* 12:9.
3. But “[n]owhere in the Hebrew Bible is there any identification made between the serpent and the Devil/Satan” or otherwise any suggestion that the serpent was not just “one of the wild animals.” Wray, *The Birth of Satan* at 79.
4. The connection between the serpent and the devil is made in *The Wisdom of Solomon*: **“For God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his**

own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world." *Wisdom 2:23 – 24.*

5. This is the first time in Jewish literature that the devil is made responsible for sin and death. Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* at 74.

6. Prior to this, the serpent of the story of Adam and Eve **"is just a snake; certainly he is not Satan."** Segal, *Life after Death* at 165.

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1. **"There is no notion in what may be called orthodox Israelite religion of a separate existence for the soul after death."** *Oxford Companion to the Bible* at 295.

2. Instead, as taught in *2 Maccabees*, at the end of time God will recreate a body in the same way that he had created Adam. *2 Maccabees* 7:28 – 29.

3. As N.T. Wright says, resurrection of the dead **"happened when God created newly embodied beings after whatever intermediate state there might be."** Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus* at 134.

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1. On the other hand, the Greeks believed, based on the teachings of Socrates and his pupil Plato, that an individual is made up of an imperfect and perishable body and a perfect and immortal soul that will be returned to the gods upon that person's death.

2. *The Wisdom of Solomon* articulates the Greek view of an immortal soul: **"For the reasoning of mortals is worthless, and our designs are likely to fail; for a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind."** *Wisdom* 9:14 – 15.

3. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul uses nearly identical image of an earthly body weighing down an immortal soul: **"For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden . . ."** *2 Corinthians* 5:1, 4.

4. The Greek phrase translated as **"earthy tent"** in both *The Wisdom of Solomon* and *2 Corinthians* is not found elsewhere in the Septuagint or the New Testament, leading one authority on the Apocrypha to conclude that Paul **"had at sometime read and [was] impressed by the Wisdom of Solomon."** Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* at 158.

5. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote: **"If I am to go on living in this body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know. I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but is more necessary for you that I remain in the body."** *Philippians* 1:22-24.

6. Paul's writings about an immortal soul, paralleling the teachings of *The Wisdom of Solomon*, provide much of the basis for the Christian belief that a person's soul goes to heaven at death, an idea contrary to the belief in bodily resurrection at the time of a final judgment that was accepted by many Jews at the time of Jesus. See *John* 6:40.

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1. *The Wisdom of Solomon* also provides rudimentary conceptions of heaven and hell, not found in the Hebrew Scriptures.
2. After death, the **“unrighteous” “will suffer anguish.”** *Wisdom* 4:16 – 19.
3. **“But the righteous will live forever, and their reward is with the Lord; the Most High takes care of them.”** *Wisdom* 5:15.
4. This statement **“is one of the first intimations of heaven as the abode of the godly.”** Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* at 74.
5. In the Hebrew Scriptures, heaven was the abode only of God and heavenly beings.
6. As Jesus Himself said: **“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.”** *John* 3:13.
7. *Wisdom* taught that the destination will be determined **“on the day of judgment,”** a concept foreign to the Hebrew Scriptures written before 400 B.C. *Wisdom* 3:18.

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1. Like *Sirach*, *The Wisdom of Solomon* provided early Christians support for their conclusion that Jesus was the incarnation of God.
2. *Wisdom* 7:22 includes this personification of “wisdom:” **“There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible.”**
3. The Greek word translated here as **“unique”** is *“monogenes,”* the same word translated as **“only begotten”** in *John* 3:16, one of the few verses in the New Testament using that word.
4. *Wisdom* also states: **“O God of my ancestors and Lord of mercy, who have made all things by your word. *** [Y]our powerful word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne, into the midst of the land that was doomed.”** *Wisdom* 9:1; 18:15.
5. Compare this with the first chapter of *John*: **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made. *** The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”** *John* 1 – 3, 14.

6. One author has concluded that the early Christian reliance on statements in *The Wisdom of Solomon* makes it the most important of all books of the Apocrypha in understanding the development of Christian conclusions about the nature of Jesus. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 295.

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1. Next week we will look at Jewish writings between the testaments that collectively are known as the Pseudepigrapha, meaning books claiming to be have been written by someone else.

2. Among the writings we will talk about are *1 and 2 Enoch*, *Psalms of Solomon*, *Testaments of the Patriarchs* and *Jubilees*, which have had an enormous impact on Jewish thought about such things as the expectation of a Messiah, the nature of heaven and hell, and the source of evil.

3. We will see in these books a number of ideas and thoughts that were accepted and even quoted by New Testament writers, including Paul.

Resources:

Helyer, Larry, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* (InterVarsity Press 2002)

Ironside, H. A., *The 400 Silent Years* (Loizeaux Brothers 1914)

Kugel, James, *How to Read the Bible* (Free Press 2007)

Metzger, Bruce, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* (Oxford University Press 1957)

Pagels, Elaine, *The Origin of Satan* (Vintage Books 1995)

Segal, Alan, *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (Doubleday 2004)

Stone, Michael, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (Fortress Press 1984)

Surburg, Raymond, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* (Concordia 1975)

Wray, T. J., *The Birth of Satan* (Palgrave Macmillan 2005)

Wright, N.T., *The Challenge of Jesus* (InterVarsity Press 1999)