

Quick Class After Mass

St. John's Episcopal Church, Charlotte, Michigan
Summer 2014

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Session I: The "Other" Books of the Bible: The Deuterocanonical Scriptures, AKA "The Apocrypha"

1 Esdras

Date: 2nd Century BC
Language: Hebrew or Aramaic
Genre: Historical Narrative
Content: Materials in common with portions of 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah

2 Esdras

Date: 1st Century AD
Language: Hebrew or Aramaic
Genre: Apocalypse
Content: Seven revelations, wherein we are introduced to the Archangel Uriel. As Rome is condemned, and the fate of Jerusalem lamented, the Seer struggles with the problem of theodicy, or the question of why God lets bad things happen.

Tobit

Date: 2nd Century BC
Language: Hebrew or Aramaic
Genre: Fantastic Moral Fiction
Content: The Archangel Raphael makes his only appearance in Holy Scripture to assist Tobit and others, while revealing Holy Mysteries and sharing Words of Wisdom along the way. Also, the story includes the only pet dog in Holy Scripture.

Judith

Date: 2nd Century BC
Language: Hebrew
Genre: Narrative Historical Fiction
Content: Judith, the patriotic Hebrew woman, intoxicates, seduces, and beheads Holofernes, the Babylonian Emperor Nebuchadnezzar's chief General.

Additions to Esther

Date: 2nd Century BC

Language: Greek

Genre: Variety

Content: These additions to Esther serve to theologize the book, by embellishing the book throughout with additions which include frequent and significant references to God.

Wisdom of Solomon

Date: 1st Century BC

Language: Greek

Genre: Poetic Wisdom and Testimony

Content: Here, it seems that a Greek Jew, probably living in Alexandria, presented older wisdom literature, perhaps from multiple sources, perhaps from Hebrew language sources, which were not otherwise included in the Canon of Scripture.

The Book of the Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus, Sirach)

Date: 2nd Century

Language: Hebrew

Genre: Teachings

Content: Last of the great works of Jewish Wisdom Literature and a foretaste of the intellectual orientation of the Pharisees who would come. Traditionally considered to be the most important of the Deuterocanonical Scriptures in the Western Church.

Baruch

Date: 1st or 2nd Century BC

Language: Hebrew

Genre: Teaching

Content: Composition including materials from multiple sources. Purports to be a letter from Jeremiah's secretary, written from Babylon to the Jews who remained in Palestine.

Letter of Jeremiah

Date: 3rd or 2nd Century BC

Language: Hebrew

Genre: Teaching

Content: Purports to be a letter from Jeremiah to the Jews who are about to be taken captive to Babylonia. The book presents a rambling discourse against the folly of Idolatry.

Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men

Date: 2nd or 1st Century BC

Language: Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek

Genre: Songs of Praise

Content: Addition to Daniel. Songs of the three young Hebrews who were thrown into a fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar for refusing to worship a golden idol.

Susanna

Date: 2nd or 1st Century BC

Language: Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek

Genre: Historical Fiction

Content: Addition to Daniel. Considered one of the finest short stories ever written. A morality play, in which good, represented by Susanna, triumphs over evil, which of course is represented ultimately by Nebuchadnezzar.

Of Bel and the Dragon

Date: 2nd or 1st Century BC

Language: Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek

Genre: Historical Fiction

Content: Addition to Daniel. With some very clever detective work, Daniel exposes and defeats the idols of Babylon, while ridiculing pagan priestcraft.

Prayer of Manasseh

Date: 2nd or 1st Century BC

Language: Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek

Genre: Devotional Poetry in Liturgical Form

Content: A fine example of penitential devotion.

1 Maccabees

Date: 2nd Century BC

Language: Hebrew

Genre: Historical Narrative

Content: A fine telling of the victory and rule of the Maccabees.

2 Maccabees

Date: 1st Century BC

Language: Greek

Genre: Historical Narrative

Content: An abridgement of a much larger, five volume history, which is now lost, of the story of the Maccabees. As a history, 2 Maccabees is generally considered to be less trustworthy than 1 Maccabees.

4(3 Maccabees)

Date: 2nd Century BC

Language: Greek

Genre: Historical Narrative

Content: 3 Maccabees is only considered to be Canonical Scripture in the Eastern Churches. It has nothing to do with the Maccabees. Rather, it addresses the suffering of the Jews, especially the Egyptian Jews, under the reign of the Ptolemaic Emperor Ptolomy IV Philopator of Egypt, and the suffering of Palestinian Jews under the reign of the Seleucid Emperor Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who was considered by many of his contemporary peers to be insane.

(4 Maccabees)

Date: 1st Century AD

Language: Greek

Genre: Diatribe

Content: 4 Maccabees has never been properly Canonized by any polity in the Christian Church. However, it is often included within the binding of Bibles, especially in the East. A diatribe emphasizing and advocating religious reason.

(Psalm 151)

Date: Unknown

Language: Probably Hebrew

Genre: Psalm

Content: A song of celebration by David upon having defeated Goliath the Philistine. While not properly Canonized, Psalm 151 is often included in the binding of Bibles in the East. It is the best known of a number of non-canonical psalms which have come down to the Church through history.