

# The Old Testament Apocrypha: inspired or inspiring?

**Whether we consider the book of the apocrypha inspired scripture or not, it definitely has a great deal of wisdom that all of us could benefit from.**

The word "Apocrypha" is a Greek word that means "hidden things". It is also used to refer to a select group of Jewish writings. They were not considered "hidden" in the sense that they were reserved for the "inner circle" of believers, but rather because they are considered "questionable" in regards to being divinely inspired scripture.

What is commonly referred to as the "Apocrypha" is a collection of 15 books or Jewish writings that were written between 250 B.C. and the early Christian centuries. The Roman Catholic church does regard the Apocrypha to be inspired scripture, although Jewish and Protestant sects do not. Their main reasons for not accepting them are as follows:

1. Although Jesus and His disciples were familiar with the writings in the Apocryphal books, they never quoted them as authoritative scripture.
2. The Apocryphal book, 2 Esdras, makes mention of knowledge of the Old Testament as known to Jewish synagogues and Protestant churches. It mentions 24 books that are in the Hebrew Bible as it is known today.
3. Many scholars hold that the books of the Apocrypha are written on an inferior level than other scriptures, as they contain numerous inaccuracies.

So why do we hang on to these writings? Why are they included in many printed versions of the Bible, even though it is made plain that the printers of these versions do not recognize them as divinely inspired?

Obviously, there is much we can gain from the Apocryphal books, both in knowledge and inspiration. In the Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican Church, a common position on the Apocrypha is summed up. "...the Church doth read the Apocryphal books for example of life and instruction of manners, but yet doth it not apply them to confess any doctrine."

We need to look at the insight these books have to offer. Ecclesiasticus proclaims the virtues of wisdom. It has 51 chapters of insight into the ways of Godly living and fear of the Lord. In fact it begins in chapter 1, verse 1 with saying "All wisdom is from the Lord and she dwells with Him forever", and closes with chapter 51, verse 30 with "Do your duty in good time, and He in His own time will give your reward". And every chapter and verse in between is filled with even more wise words. Even though we know it was written by a scholar from Jerusalem and it is not considered divinely inspired, it still has much to offer us. The same holds true for the other 14 books, one of which is called the "Wisdom of Solomon". This was written by an Alexandrian Jew between 150 and 5 B.C. This book is based on the Old Testament and praises Israel's strength and history.

Daniel and Susanna tell the story of wisdom and prevailing justice, and the Maccabees give us retelling of historical accounts of the Jewish people and the Maccabean wars which

brought about the independence of the Jewish state. It also gives us the account of the beginnings of Hanukkah, the Jewish holy days also known as "the Feast of the Dedication".

There are many other books of the Apocrypha that are not mentioned here, but they are definitely worth researching. They give us insight into the Jewish society and history of the times and their stories and exhortations give us guidelines to live by. These books may not be considered divinely inspired but they are definitely inspiring.