

## Why Not Those Books?

The Canon and the Apocrypha

*Then He told them, "These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you--that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. - Luke 24:44-45 HCSB*



There were several principal criteria that determined whether or not the early church considered a book to be canonical. The first was “**authorship**.” Was the book written by a prophet, an apostle or an accredited spokesperson of God? This stemmed from the view that God is the ultimate authority – not the Church.

- **2 Peter 1:20-21 HCSB** First of all, you should know this: no prophecy of Scripture comes from one's own interpretation, (21) because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, moved by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God.

God was the one who determined who the real prophet was. God was the one who created the truth, not us.

Immediate contemporaries confirmed that a person was a true prophet through divine miracles or fulfilled prophecies.

- **Exodus 3:1-3 HCSB** Meanwhile Moses was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. (2) Then the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire within a bush. As Moses looked, he saw that the bush was on fire but was not consumed. (3) So Moses thought: I must go over and look at this remarkable sight. Why isn't the bush burning up?
- **1 Kings 18:1 HCSB** After a long time, the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year: "Go and present yourself to Ahab. I will send rain on the surface of the land."
- **Acts 2:22 HCSB** "Men of Israel, listen to these words: This Jesus the Nazarene was a man pointed out to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through Him, just as you yourselves know.
- **2 Corinthians 12:12 HCSB (12)** The signs of an apostle were performed among you in all endurance--not only signs but also wonders and miracles.
- **Hebrews 2:3-4 HCSB** how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was first spoken by the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him. (4) At the same time, God also testified by signs and wonders, various miracles, and distributions of gifts from the Holy Spirit according to His will.

However, the ability to perform neat tricks was not enough. Their teachings had to mesh with God's previous teachings.

- **Deuteronomy 13:1-4 HCSB (1)** "If a prophet or someone who has dreams arises among you and proclaims a sign or wonder to you, (2) and that sign or wonder he has promised you comes about, but he says, 'Let us follow other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us worship them,' (3) do not listen to that prophet's words or to that dreamer. For the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul. (4) You must follow the LORD your God and fear Him. You must keep His commands and listen to His voice; you must worship Him and remain faithful to Him.

The fact that none of the apocryphal books claim to be written by a prophet tells us that we should not use them for doctrinal purposes. In fact, 1 Maccabees even says that it isn't prophetic!

*And there was a great tribulation in Israel, such as was not since the day, that there was no prophet seen in Israel. – 1 Maccabees 9:27*

The second criterion was “**authority**.” Did the book *claim* to be the Word of God? Between the Old and the New Covenants we find over 3,800 claims of divine inspiration.

- [2 Timothy 3:16 HCSB](#) All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness,
- [2 Peter 1:21 HCSB](#) because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, moved by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God.
- [2 Peter 3:16 HCSB](#) He speaks about these things in all his letters, in which there are some matters that are hard to understand. The untaught and unstable twist them to their own destruction, as they also do with the rest of the Scriptures.

Among the Apocryphal books – none.

Thirdly, there was “**validation**.” Did Christ and the other authors confirm that the book was scriptural? For example, in today’s text, Christ validated the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms (which were part of the Jewish Old Covenant called “the writings”), essentially validating the entire Old Covenant as being Scriptural. Though there may (and that is very much up to debate) be a couple of allusions to the Apocrypha (Matthew 7:12; 27:43-54; Romans 9:21; Ephesians 6:13-17; Hebrews 1:3; James 1:6, 19; 5:6), this is not a proven fact. While it is possible that the New Covenant’s writers were familiar with the Apocrypha, it is plain that they did not directly quote from these books. The supposed allusions to the Apocrypha in the New Covenant could just as easily be allusions to other Old Covenant histories or to facts given directly by revelation. We must remember that the Scriptures are not the product of man, but of God.

The fourth consideration could be called “**contents**” with the fundamental question being “does it agree with or contradict the rest of the Scriptures?” In this the Apocrypha fails abysmally, contradicting Hebrews’ clear teaching that Christ offered the sacrifice of His blood *once for all*<sup>1</sup> by teaching the doctrine of the Mass. 2 Maccabees teaches that it is proper to pray to the dead and make offerings to atone for the sins of the dead. Consider this quote from 2 Maccabees 12:43-45:

*"He also took up a collection ... and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. ... For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen asleep would arise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead ... Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin." - 2 Maccabees 12:43-45*

The Bible, though, says there is only one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

- [1 Timothy 2:5-6 HCSB](#) For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, a man, Christ Jesus, (6) who gave Himself--a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time.
- [1 John 2:1-2 HCSB](#) My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father--Jesus Christ the righteous One. (2) He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

Moreover, this one perfect sacrifice only needed to be made the one time!

- [Hebrews 7:27 HCSB](#) He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day, as high priests do--first for their own sins, then for those of the people. He did this once for all when He offered Himself.
- [Hebrews 10:10-14 HCSB](#) By this will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all. (11) Now every priest stands day after day ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. (12) But this man, after offering one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God. (13) He is now waiting until His enemies are made His footstool. (14) For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified.

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 7:27

Thus, the dead in Christ need no human, earthly prayers or offerings. At death the lost go immediately to a place of torment and there is no purpose in praying for them.

- **Luke 16:22-23 HCSB** One day the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. (23) And being in torment in Hades, he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off, with Lazarus at his side.

2 Maccabees also contains the heresy that deceased saints not only interceding in heaven for those on earth but actually returning to earth to intervene in mortal affairs:

*"What he saw was this: Onias, the former high priest, a good and virtuous man, modest in appearance, gentle in manners, distinguished in speech, and trained from childhood in every virtuous practice, was praying with outstretched arms for the whole Jewish community. (13) Then in the same way another man appeared, distinguished by his white hair and dignity, and with an air about him of extraordinary, majestic authority. (14) Onias then said of him, "This is God's prophet Jeremiah, who loves his brethren and fervently prays for his people and their holy city." (15) Stretching out his right hand, Jeremiah presented a gold sword to Judas. As he gave it to him he said, (16) "Accept this holy sword as a gift from God; with it you shall crush your adversaries." - 2 Maccabees 15:12-16*

The Bible teaches that it is the Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, who is interceding for us in Heaven--not deceased saints (Heb. 4:14-16; 8:1-2; 1 Jn. 2:1-2).

- **Hebrews 4:14-16 HCSB** Therefore since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens--Jesus the Son of God--let us hold fast to the confession. (15) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin. (16) Therefore let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time.
- **Hebrews 8:1-2 HCSB** Now the main point of what is being said is this: we have this kind of high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, (2) a minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle, which the Lord set up, and not man.
- **1 John 2:1-2 HCSB** My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father--Jesus Christ the righteous One. (2) He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

The last criterion was that of "**universality.**" Were the writings accepted and received by the early Christians universally? This was not simply a popularity contest where a popular author like Max Lucado would have found his writings granted the status of Scripture. The work had to conform to the previous four criteria and the Christians looked to truly authoritative figures. For example, though Augustine favored the Apocrypha, Josephus did not. Josephus' view won out because the Jewish Christians knew that there were no prophets during the 400 years between the two Covenants. How could the Apocryphal books, which were written during that time period be authoritative?

The decision to reject the Apocrypha was sound. We can be sure that the books we have in the Bible are clearly the inspired Word of God and that we have all of them.