

## Lesson for February 1, 2009

### Old Testament Survey

#### Canonicity, the Controversial Books of the Old Testament

There were four categories of the books involved in the canon of Scripture: 1) Homologoumena (one word, agreement) – books accepted by all; 2) Antilegomena (spoken against) – disputed books; 3) Pseudepigrapha (false writings, spurious) – books rejected by all; 4) Apocrypha (hidden, secret) – books accepted by some.

##### Homologoumena

Thirty-four of the thirty-nine books in the English versions of the Protestant Old Testament are undisputed. The five disputed books were Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Ezekiel and Proverbs. The accepted books held a continual status not only by early generations but by succeeding generations as well.

##### Antilegomena

These books were considered by some as a part of the canon of Scripture and disputed by others. All of these books were a part of the canon of Scripture at one time but subsequently came into question later.

Song of Solomon was disputed by some because it seemed sensual. This seemed a weak argument for excluding it from the canon. It seemed more a question of interpretation than it did of inspiration. Song of Solomon actually gives us God's view of marriage and rejects the practice of multiple wives. This is seen in the problems and downfall of Solomon.

Ecclesiastes was disputed because it seemed skeptical. Skepticism about man and his relationship with God seemed to be the dispute, but Ecclesiastes itself comes to the spiritual conclusion that man's entire duty is to fear God and keep His commandments. This hardly seems skeptical. Once again, it was more a matter of interpretation than inspiration.

Esther was disputed because God's name is never mentioned in the book. Some claimed that the book seemed unspiritual. However, God can clearly be seen throughout the book in His care and deliverance of His people. His grace and power are illustrated in many ways in this book.

Ezekiel was disputed because it was thought its teachings were anti-Mosaic. One school of theology thought the book was not in harmony with the Law of Moses and had a tendency toward Gnosticism. No contradictions were sighted however and once again it was more a matter of interpretation than inspiration.

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Proverbs was disputed because some said it was illogical and contradicted itself. Proverbs 26:4-5 is often sighted as proof. The statement that one “should answer a fool according to his folly” and one “should not answer a man according to his folly” is like saying “on the one hand and on the other hand.” There are times when one should answer the fool and other times when one should not answer him. No reason to exclude this book from the canon.

### Pseudepigrapha

There were many extra-biblical books that were not included in the canon of Scripture. Some of these books are actually referred to in the New Testament but this does not qualify them for inclusion in the canon. Truth is truth, even if quoted by an unbeliever or skeptic. Many of these books are Hebrew lore and many are just false. Just because a book contains some truth does not make the overall content of the book doctrinally correct or truthful. Many of these books are also fanciful and magical and do not depict real events. There are approximately eighteen of these books, such as The Book of Jubilee, The Book of Adam and Eve, I Enoch, The Assumption of Moses, etc.

### Apocrypha

The word Apocrypha itself is an indication that the books considered in this group were thought to be doubtful by many. To add to the confusion, there were two canons – the Palestinian Canon (containing twenty-two books in Hebrew, thirty-nine in English) and the Alexandrian Canon (with the additional fourteen or fifteen books known as the Apocrypha). In Hebrew some of the books of the canon were considered to be one book, thus the difference between the twenty-two books and the thirty-nine books. The Palestinian Canon was the Hebrew canon accepted by the Jews and the Alexandrian Canon was the Greek canon (it arose when the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into the Greek Septuagint). The Apocrypha that is accepted by the Roman Catholic Church contains only eleven of the books from the Alexandrian Canon. Protestants follow the Hebrew canon, which is the Palestinian Canon. The arguments for following the Palestinian Canon are: 1) it was the canon followed by Jesus 2) the Alexandrian Canon supports prayers for the dead, but the Palestinian Canon does not 3) these books are not fanciful or unauthentic 4) the Alexandrian Canon is at times immoral 5) the Alexandrian Canon records historical and chronological errors 6) there are no claims in the Apocrypha that it is the Word of God 7) Jesus and the New Testament writers do not quote the Apocrypha, but there are hundreds of quotes and references to the Hebrew canon (Palestinian). What Jesus and the New Testament writers continually emphasized was knowledge and application of God’s Word (Bible doctrine). It was Jesus Who said that God is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth and “take my yoke upon you and learn of me.”

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Paul wrote that we should renew our minds in order to discover God's plan, purpose and will. It takes a lifetime of persistent and consistent study to learn Bible doctrine. God's Word likens spiritual growth to building a house. Often expressed as edification, the concept in Greek is to build or to build up. For the Christian, this occurs in his soul as he exposes himself to accurate Bible teaching and applies the truth that he learns. As with any building, we must be careful to first "lay" the right foundation before we build on it. The Scripture is clear that the only foundation for the believer is Jesus Christ Himself. We know that the Word of God is the mind of Christ. Therefore, the foundation is the written Word (Christ is the living Word). The written Word of God is meant to be understood and utilized as a blueprint for building your spiritual building (the Christian Way of Life).

The Greek word for *edification* is "oikodome" and literally means the act of building or erecting a structure. (Ephesians 4:11-29) Like any structure, our "building" in the soul must have a firm foundation and properly constructed "floors." Our foundation is Jesus Christ and the "floors" are categories of Bible doctrine. Once the foundation is in place, then the believer can begin to build upon it with full confidence that it will stand. The foundation is received at salvation, but the floors must be built over a period of time, as Bible doctrine is learned, believed and properly applied. (Ephesians 4:12,16,29; Colossians 2:7; 1 Timothy 1:4; James 1:4)

The basis for any system from God is always His grace. The word grace itself makes it clear that God's system for building the spiritual building is void of any human merit, human works, human ability or human viewpoint thinking. The reason that God planned it this way is to eliminate human viewpoint thinking and human production as the means for building anything spiritual. Instead, He provided a non-meritorious system for both perception and execution of the Christian Way of Life: faith. We learn how to erect this building in our souls by faith and it takes faith to put into practice. This method is the only one that can bring honor and glory to God. (Hebrews 11:6)

The spiritual building is built using the stored Bible doctrine in the mind of the believer. Consistent study and accurate application over a period of time is the method for developing our "complex." This building is literally Christ being formed in the soul of the believer. Positionally, Christ is "in" every believer, but experientially He is not "formed" in every believer. Jesus Christ had this spiritual building formed in His soul. He had all the characteristics of spiritual maturity: 1) He was full of grace and truth 2) He had a relaxed mental attitude 3) He was free from mental attitude sins 4) He had capacity for love and 5) He had divine inner happiness. Christ erected the spiritual building in His soul as a demonstration to all believers that it is possible for us to do the same through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 4:19; John 1:14)

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As believer-priests, we have the opportunity to build a spiritual building in *our* souls. With Christ as our example, we simply follow His pattern. Christ, as a perfect human being, built this building under the filling of the Holy Spirit as He learned and applied the Word of God. As we abide in Him (fellowship with God) and His word abides in us (Bible doctrine) we are allowing God the Holy Spirit to produce the character of Christ in our lives. (John 15:10) The Bible uses a number of terms to refer to this building process. For example, walking in the light (I John 2:3-11), walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-23), imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1), Christ at home in your hearts (Ephesians 3:17), and Christ formed in you. (Galatians 4:19)

The true function of the believer-priest's spiritual life is the development of a relationship with God. This relationship is your unseen, private life with God. You and you alone know what that relationship is like. Your life before others, which we call the Christian Life, can be faked. (I Corinthians 2:9-16)

There are many counterfeits to the spiritual life. It is therefore of extreme importance for each of us, as believers, to learn, understand and execute the *true* spiritual life. Without a correct understanding of the Biblical spiritual life, the believer will go through life executing some form of legalism or asceticism that will lead to only misery and unhappiness. The spiritual life is not what you do for God, the church or other people. *The true spiritual life is your invisible relationship with God and what He does for you.*