
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **What about the "Lost" books of the Bible?**

We are asking if the Bible is complete? Did God fully reveal all of His will to mankind and if so, did He preserve it?

WHAT JESUS SAID

Let's listen to what Jesus said about this matter. To His apostles Jesus said the Holy Spirit would guide them into "all truth" (John 16:13). The apostle Peter himself verified that this was fulfilled; all truth had indeed been delivered to the apostles (2 Peter 1:3). This divine revelation was written down so it would be preserved for future generations (Ephesians 3:3-4; 1 Corinthians 14:37).

But, is it possible that some of these holy writings could have been lost, or corrupted to the point that they are no longer reliable? Jesus said:

Matthew 24:35

35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

We are assured by the Lord Himself that these sacred Scriptures would not be lost, or hopelessly corrupted.

A COMMON ARGUMENT

But now it is time for someone to argue that some of the Bible has been lost. A few years ago a book was published and circulated in books stores entitled, "The Lost Books of the Bible."

Evidently the publisher believed that such a title would arouse the curiosity of the reading public and produce a handsome profit.

The title of this book was very misleading for two reasons:

- a) The books which were supposedly "lost" were never lost; scholars and historians have always known of their existence.
- b) These books were never part of the Bible.

But some people, unwilling to accept what the Lord said, argue that the Bible itself mentions books that now are lost. This belief is based on passages like this:

Colossians 4:16

16 Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

Here the "epistle from Laodicea" is mentioned and it is argued by some that this is an inspired book of the Bible that has been lost because we no longer can find such a book.

But in response to this, let us be fair with this passage and admit that it does not necessarily refer to some lost book. There are several possibilities as to what is meant by the wording of this verse:

- Paul may simply have meant: "When you are finished reading this epistle to the Laodiceans, go forth from Laodicea and read the epistle elsewhere."
- The "epistle from Laodicea" (if it is a different epistle) may be a reference to one of the general epistles which Laodicea had in its possession -- for example, the book of Ephesians.

OTHER "LOST" BOOKS?

Still not satisfied to believe what Jesus said about God's word not passing away, some people argue that there are still other books mentioned in the Bible that we have no record of today. Supposedly these books have been lost. For example:

Num 21:14 -- the book of the wars of the LORD

Josh 10:13 -- the book of Jasher

1 Kings 11:41 -- the book of the acts of Solomon

1 Chron 29:29 -- the book of Samuel the seer, the book of Nathan the prophet, and the book of Gad the seer

2 Chron 9:29 -- book of Nathan the prophet, and the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the visions of Iddo the seer

2 Chron 20:34 -- the book of Jehu

How can we account for the mention of all these books which indeed seem to be "lost books" of the Bible?

To these books, and others like them I would say three things:

(1) Some of these books mentioned may simply be different names for some of the books which we do have!

(For example, the "Book of Nathan the prophet" may be a reference to 2 Samuel, or Joshua -- inasmuch as we do not know who wrote every particular book.)

(2) Some of these books mentioned are not necessarily inspired books!

(They may be mere references to uninspired books that were around during those days that the writer is referring his readers to for more information.)

(3) Some of these books may be smaller books that have been incorporated into larger books which we do have.

(For example, in Matthew 1:1 we read of "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ" and then the genealogy of Jesus is given. Here we find a smaller book consisting of genealogies on the inside of a larger book -- the gospel of Matthew. It is possible that smaller books written by Nathan the prophet, or by Gad the seer are merely incorporated into larger books which we actually do possess and if this is the case, there are no "lost books" of the Bible.)

Now, in order to have a case, it must be shown that:

- These books in question were not alternate names of books which we already possess.
- That these books were inspired books to begin with.
- That none of these were smaller books that were incorporated into larger books.

Until those points are proven there is no proof that some of the inspired books of the Bible have been lost.

THE "CATHOLIC" BIBLE

Now ... we cannot do justice to this subject without saying a word about the "Catholic Bible." You will notice that the Bible used in the Catholic Church contains 15 books in the OT which our Bibles do not have. These books are called "The Apocrypha."

"Apocrypha" means "hidden and that's an appropriate name for these books because their origin is "hidden." We don't know their origin and so we leave them out.

Interestingly, even the Catholic Church rejected these books. On April 8, 1546, in the 4th Session of the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church pronounced these books as inspired! But, until then, even they rejected them!

Q: Why do we reject these books?

A: Basically for three reasons:

1) The Jews rejected them!

Romans 3:1-2

- 1 What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?
- 2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.

God entrusted the Jews with the OT Scriptures, but the Jews never acknowledged these books as inspired.

The Jews committed many sins, but never once were they accused of tampering with the Scriptures! Sometimes they misinterpreted them, and disobeyed them, but they did not destroy them, or tamper with them!

2) Jesus and the apostles rejected the books of apocrypha!

There are over 295 OT quotations in the NT. If allusions are counted then 10% of the NT is quotations of the OT! BUT, not one quote is taken from the Apocrypha.

Because Jesus did not quote from them, and did not rebuke the Jews for rejecting them is evidence that He Himself rejected them.

3) The Apocrypha itself declares it is uninspired!

One passage in particular admits that there were no prophets living on earth at the time when it was written (1 Maccabees 9:27).

If for no other reason, this alone should cause us to reject these books!