

# Dead Sea Scrolls

1. Everything of man deteriorates, Gen.3:17-19; Isa.40:7-8.
2. Everything of God is different, for example, God's Word, Isa.40:8. Peter reaffirms regarding N.T., I Pet.1:24, 25.
3. Radical false teachers like Joseph Smith, Mohammed, justify radical differences by claiming deterioration of God's Word.
  - a. God's promises assure us this is false.
  - b. Archaeology continually confirms these claims are false.
4. In spite of information filtered through unbelief of liberal scholars, it can now be stated with confidence that this assurance is the primary significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

## I. The Discovery.

- A. Accidentally found in 1947 by Bedouin shepherds of Ta-amireh tribe searching for lost sheep in Wadi Qumran near Dead Sea.
  1. Young boys tossed stone in a cave, heard cracking sound; pottery vessel being broken. Investigation revealed sealed pottery vessels containing old scrolls, 7 in cave 1.
  2. Sold find to cobbler, Kando. Lived in Bethlehem. Owned souvenir shop in lobby of St. George's Hotel, Jerusalem.
- B. Fragment came to scholars, Jerusalem's Hebrew University early 1948. American archaeologist, William F. Albright, confirmed genuineness, dated at over 2,000 years old.
- C. Acquisition of the scrolls.
  1. E. L. Sukenik, scholar at Hebrew University determined to acquire scrolls, early 1948, before creation of Jewish state.
  2. Yigael Yadin, Sukenik's son, Israeli archaeologist, was also head of Israeli underground army. Jerusalem was under Arab siege. Bethlehem was Arab city. Son told Sukenik The task was too dangerous.
  3. Sukenik ignored warning, made trip to Bethlehem, acquired 3 of the 7 scrolls. Within 24 hours, United Nations by 2/3 vote passed resolution creating Jewish state.
  4. Remaining 4 scrolls obtained by Assyrian cleric, Mars Samuel. Took them to New York, advertised in Wall St. Journal.
  5. Yigael Yadin was in New York and saw the ad. Knowing he would not sell to an Israeli, called professor Harry Orlinski of Columbia Univ. to verify (easy to be fooled) and obtain scrolls for him. Met in New York warehouse, identified himself as Mr. Green, acquired the scrolls for \$250,000.
  6. Acquired for Israel. Now in beautiful Shrine of the Book, shaped like one of the jars in which scrolls were found.
- D. Mad scramble for more scrolls followed.
  1. Competition developed between archaeologists & Bedouins for additional scrolls. Bedouins almost always won.

2. Eventually, a total of 11 caves containing 800 scrolls.
3. Cave 4 contained 500 scrolls in over 15,000 fragments. These are the scrolls that remained unpublished for so long.
  - a. Cave 4 discovered when Qumran controlled by Jordanian government transferred scrolls to Palestinian Rockefeller Museum and assigned material to eight international, scholars. Jews were excluded.
  - b. Fragments jumbled, unorganized. Took until 1960 to arrange fragments between sheets of glass. Divvied up amongst 8 scholars. Hoarded 80%.
4. 1991 Herschel Shanks of *Biblical Archeological Review* published computer-reconstructed transcription of scrolls based on unpublished concordance, resulting in full access.

## II. The Essenes (Residents Of Qumran).

- A. Renegade sect of Jews (Cf. Pharisees, Saducees) withdrew to Judean desert @ 300 BC, awaiting coming of the Messiah.
  1. Temple Scroll revealed plans to build new Temple. Opposed Jerusalem Temple. Jerusalem priests were their enemies.
  2. Manual of Discipline describes some different ideas, elaborate initiation, rules, that govern daily life and assemblies.
    - a. Spitting was prohibited. "Whoever has spat in an assembly shall do penance for 30 days."
    - b. Marriage forbidden (yet 300 year history?).
- B. Described by secular historians.
  1. Philo, Alexandrian philosopher.
  2. Communal relationship described by historian, Josephus. "Riches they despise, and their community of goods is truly admirable; you will not find one among them distinguished by greater opulence than another. They have a law that new members on admission to the sect shall confiscate their property to the order, with the result that you will nowhere see either abject poverty or inordinate wealth; the individual's possessions join the common stock and all, like brothers, enjoy a single patrimony."
  3. Pliny The Elder, Roman scholar, author of *Natural History*. "On the west side of the Dead Sea, but out of range of the noxious exhalations of the coast, is the solitary tribe of the Essenes, which is remarkable beyond all the other tribes in the whole world, as it has no women and has renounced all sexual desire, has no money, and has only palm trees for company. Day by day the throng of refugees is recruited to an equal number by numerous accessions of persons tired of life and driven thither by the waves of fortune to adopt their manners. Thus through thousands of ages (incredible to relate), a race in which no one is born lives on forever; so prolific for their advantage is other men's weariness of life! Lying below them [that is, these Essenes] was formerly the town of Engedi."

### III. Nature Of The Scroll Material.

#### A. Biblical

1. Biblical texts: Fragments of every OT book except Esther! (Due to their exclusionary position regarding women?)  
Deuteronomy-25 copies; Isaiah-18 copies; Psalms-27 copies; Genesis-15 copies; Exodus-15 copies.
2. *Biblical commentaries*; Habakkuk (beautiful complete); Micah-2 copies; Zephaniah-2 copies; Psalms-4 copies; Isaiah-6 copies; Hosea-2 copies; Nahum-1 copy.
3. Computer analysis by Spanish papyrologist Jose O'Callaghan (*The Jesus Papyrus*) identified 18 NT fragments from cave 7, (including Mark). Written before destruction Of Jerusalem.

#### B. Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha.

1. Book of Enoch; Book of Noah.
2. Book of Jubilees-15 copies; Book of Giants-6 copies.

#### C. Sectarian (peculiar to "denomination of Essenes").

1. Examples: War Scroll, Damascus Document, Manual of Discipline or Community Rule, The Temple Scroll.  
Hymns, prayers, letters, commentaries reveal Messianic views.
2. Cover almost 300 yr. period. Some conflicting, competing views.

#### D. The Copper Scroll.

1. Unlike any other scroll. Language is different (unique dialect, grammatical errors, misspellings).  
Script is different. Scroll material is different, two almost pure copper scrolls found in niche in back of cave 3, by themselves, apart from other scrolls in the cave.
2. More like pirate's treasure map in Hollywood movie.  
Sixty four unidentifiable geographic locations listed each supposedly containing great treasures, truckloads of silver and gold and priestly supplies, incense, oil, clothing.
3. Had to be sawn into sections to be read. Now on display in the archaeological museum, the Citadel in Amman, Jordan.

### IV. Significance.

#### A. Large number of pseudo-Biblical scrolls in their library.

1. Attempt to discredit inspiration and our present canon.
  - a. We know nothing of Essenes' attitude toward material.
  - b. Furthermore, attitude of bizarre sect would prove nothing.
2. Cf. *NRSV*, includes apocrypha. Not new respect for Apocrypha, but lowered respect for scripture (equally uninspired).

#### B. Stunning substantiation of present text.

1. Some texts were written before 300 BC. Were copied from texts at least 200 years earlier (Indicated by Paleo-Hebrew). Includes every book of O.T. (except Esther, referenced in commentaries).  
Virtually word for word, identical to what we have now!
2. Isaiah scroll, "Beautiful", "intact." Devastates two author theory, a liberal ploy for explaining away Isaiah's prophecies.

3. Smithsonian symposium, Oct. 1990, James C. Vanderkam (Ph.D. from Harvard), challenged to name any significant difference between Qumran text and present Biblical text.
  - a. "I do not know of anything of significance other than maybe a word that has been dropped out of a text here and there."
  - b. Refers to differences in Masoretic text and Septuagint, (mostly substantiated by early Qumran text) He gave two examples involving 1 word and then 3 words).
4. Greek Minor Prophets Scroll is revision of older Greek translation which follows the Septuagint, Bible of N.T. times. (Revision is from the Septuagint toward the Masoretic.) Hebrews letters of earlier Greek text are Paleo-Hebrew, the style used before the Babylonian exile, 6th century BC!
5. Consider the conclusion of Sir Frederic Kenyon of the British Museum Of Natural History (director for 21 years).  
"It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the **text of the Bible is certain**: especially is this the case with the New Testament. ... "The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church, is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of **every doubtful passage is preserved** in some one or other of these ancient authorities."

Compare Other Early Manuscripts				
Title	Date Writ.	Earliest M.	Num. Of M.	Orig. to M.
Homer	700 BC	300 BC	673	400 yrs
Herodotus	424 BC	AD 900	8	1324 yrs
Plato	335 BC	AD 900	7	1235 yrs
Aristotle	384-322B	AD 1100	49	1222 yrs
Cesar	100-44	AD 900	10	944 yrs
Josephus	AD 70	AD 400	9	330 yrs
Tacitus	AD 100	AD 900	20	800 yrs
N. T.	AD 35-100	AD 66-125	5,366	<50 yrs

### CONCLUSION, Isa.40:8

"The grass withers, the flower fades,  
**But the word of our God stands forever.**"