

The Dead Sea Scrolls

“The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls stands among the greatest archaeological finds of the previous century. From 1947 to 1956 about 930 scrolls were found in 11 caves in Israel near the Jordanian border. The scrolls found at the site of Qumran span four centuries, from the third century B. C. to the first century A.D., and are written in four languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Nabatean” (Justin Rogers, *Gospel Advocate* November 2016, “How Important Are the Dead Sea Scrolls?”).

They wear the name “Dead Sea Scrolls” because they were found near the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is a very salty sea that is at the southern end of Palestine (Israel). It is a very dry and desolate area which receives only an inch or two of rain each year. The scrolls were found in 1947 when a Bedouin boy threw a rock into a cave to see if his lost goat was inside. When he heard pottery break he went in to see what he heard. He found pottery jars that contained scrolls. He took some of the scrolls and through a series of events they fell into the hands of scholars who realized that they were older than any manuscripts we had of the Old Testament.

This area was called “Qumran” and had been inhabited by a very strict sect of the Jews called “Essenes.” It seems that when the Roman armies entered Israel about 66 A.D. to put down the rebellion, the Essenes wanted to protect their “scriptures” and hid them in the caves. Because it is a very dry area, which receives very little rain each year, these biblical manuscripts, secular documents, and blankets were preserved.

For years it was said that parts of every book in the Old Testament had been found except the book of Esther. But, when our group was in Israel in March 2018 our guide said that within the past few days scholars had verified that part of the book of Esther had also been identified in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Of the 930 scrolls found only 222 are biblical scrolls. But, even the non-biblical manuscripts help us better understand life in the time of Jesus.

One of the greatest values of these biblical manuscripts is they prove the accuracy of the Old Testament text we had. Even though these were 1,000 years older than any Old Testament manuscripts we had, no major contradictions have been found. Interestingly before these were found, liberal scholars, who do not believe in the inspiration of the Bible, attacked the book of Isaiah saying it could not have been written during Isaiah’s time. Among the finds of the Dead Sea Scrolls is a complete copy of the book of Isaiah and it exactly matches the copy of Isaiah, we have except for one word and there is good evidence to support that word. The Masoretes, who copied the Old Testament manuscripts, were very, very, careful to make sure they were accurate. Through the centuries as men have attacked the Bible trying to prove that it is just a document written by men, it is as if God lets another archaeological discovery come to light to prove that the Bible came from God.

There is greater evidence for the accuracy of the Bible and that it came from God than there is any other book of history. You can believe your Bible!

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