



## WHAT ARE THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS?

*Ancient Evidence for the Preservation of Scripture.*

Based on *Written and Read – Season 1, Episode 6*

A teaching ministry of Dr. Robert C. Crowder

### INTRODUCTION

Imagine discovering ancient scrolls hidden in caves for nearly two thousand years.

Scrolls containing copies of the Old Testament written long before the time of Jesus.

That is exactly what happened in the mid-twentieth century with one of the most important archaeological discoveries in biblical history:

#### **The Dead Sea Scrolls.**

This discovery has become a key point in conversations about the Bible, especially when people ask:

#### **Has the Bible changed over time?**

The Dead Sea Scrolls help answer that question in a powerful way.

### THE DISCOVERY

The story begins in 1947 near the Dead Sea, in a region called Qumran.

A young shepherd was searching for a lost goat when he threw a stone into a cave and heard the sound of breaking pottery.

When he entered the cave, he found clay jars containing ancient scrolls wrapped in linen.

At first, no one fully understood what had been discovered.

But as more caves were explored, archaeologists uncovered:

- Over 900 manuscripts and fragments
- Texts dating from approximately 250 BC to AD 70

These scrolls were written **before and during the time of Jesus**, making them some of the oldest biblical manuscripts ever found.

## WHAT WAS FOUND

The Dead Sea Scrolls include three main types of writings:

- **Copies of Old Testament Books:** These are the most significant for understanding the Bible.
- Fragments from nearly every Old Testament book were discovered, with the exception of Esther.
- **Community Writings:** Documents describing the beliefs and practices of the Jewish community at Qumran.
- **Religious Commentaries:** Interpretations and explanations of biblical texts.

### The Great Isaiah Scroll

One of the most important discoveries is the **Great Isaiah Scroll**, dating to around 125 BC.

This scroll contains the entire book of Isaiah.

That means people were reading Isaiah more than a century before Jesus was born.

In Luke 4, Jesus reads from the book of Isaiah in the synagogue:

“He found the place where it was written...” (Luke 4:17)

The Dead Sea Scrolls confirm that the text Jesus read was already established and preserved.

## COMPARISON AND ACCURACY

Before the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, the primary Hebrew text used by scholars was the **Masoretic Text**, dating to around AD 1000.

The discovery of the scrolls allowed scholars to compare manuscripts over 1,000 years apart

### What Did They Find?

They found that the text had been preserved with **remarkable accuracy**.

When the Great Isaiah Scroll was compared to later manuscripts, the wording was overwhelmingly the same.

This was a powerful confirmation.

It showed that the Bible had not been changed or corrupted over time.

## WHAT SCRIPTURE ALREADY DECLARES

Long before this discovery, the Bible made clear statements about the preservation of God’s Word.

“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” (Isaiah 40:8)

“The words of the LORD are pure words... Thou shalt keep them... for ever.” (Psalm 12:6–7)

Jesus Himself affirmed the enduring nature of Scripture:

“One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law...” (Matthew 5:18)

The Dead Sea Scrolls do not create confidence in the Bible.

They confirm what the Bible already claims.

## RESPONDING TO SKEPTICISM

Some people argue that the Bible has been changed many times over the centuries.

If that were true, we would expect to see major differences between manuscripts separated by hundreds or thousands of years.

But that is not what we find.

Instead, we see consistency.

The Dead Sea Scrolls did not rewrite the Bible.

**They confirmed the Bible.**

## WHY THIS MATTERS

This discovery is not just about archaeology.

It directly impacts how we read Scripture today.

It means:

- The Old Testament you hold reflects ancient, carefully preserved texts
- The message has remained consistent across centuries
- You can read your Bible with confidence

At the same time, it is important to remember:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God...” (2 Timothy 3:16)

Our confidence in Scripture does not come from archaeology.

It comes from God.

Archaeological discoveries like the Dead Sea Scrolls simply support what God has already said.

## CONCLUSION

The Dead Sea Scrolls are one of the most significant discoveries in biblical history.

Hidden for centuries and then uncovered, they provide ancient copies of the Old Testament that confirm the careful preservation of Scripture.

What does that mean for you?

When you open your Bible today, you are not reading a changed or uncertain text.

You are reading the same message God gave and has faithfully preserved across generations.

#### LOOKING AHEAD

Next, we will explore another important question:

**Are there historical writers outside the Bible who speak about Jesus?**