

## The Dead Sea Scrolls and their use in Christian Apologetics

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Intro to the Dead Sea Scrolls  
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The Dead Sea Scrolls (hereafter DSS) are Old Testament documents that lay dormant in the area of the Dead Sea for over nineteen hundred years until by chance, a young Bedouin shepherd boy stumbled upon them in the mid 1940's. As the story goes, Muhammed edh-Dhib, of the Ta'amirah Bedouin tribe was out tending his fathers goats when all of the sudden he noticed that he was missing a goat. The young Bedouin was afraid of what his father might do to him if he was to return home without the missing goat. While Muhammed edh-Dhib and one of his cousins were out looking for the goat they came upon one of the many caves in the Dead Sea area; thinking that his lost goat may have wandered into the cave the young Bedouin threw a stone into the cave opening hoping to scare the goat out. However, instead of finding his lost goat he heard the breaking of what sounded like pottery or glass. At that point Muhammed lowered himself into the cave and found one of the great archeological treasures of all times – the Dead Sea Scrolls. Muhammad edh-Dhib eventually brought some of the scrolls he had found to an antiquities dealer in Bethlehem named Kando. Kando, thinking the scrolls were written in Syriac, brought them to a Syrian Orthodox Archbishop named Mar (Athanasius) Samuel. Mar Samuel recognized that the scrolls were written in a form of Hebrew and suspected them to be ancient and valuable. He eventually had the scrolls examined by John Trevor at the American School of Oriental Research (ASOR). Trevor contacted the world's foremost Middle East archaeologist, Dr. William Albright, and together these men confirmed the antiquity of the scrolls and dated them to sometime between the first and second century B.C. After the initial discovery, archaeologists searched other nearby caves between 1952 and 1956. They found ten other caves that contained thousands of ancient documents as well. One of the greatest

treasures of ancient manuscripts had been discovered: the Dead Sea Scrolls. With the finding of the DSS, scholars of the Old Testament for the first time had a chance to see copies of the Old Testament Scriptures that actually pre-dated the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Before the discovery of the DSS, the earliest existing manuscript of the Old Testament was dated around 900 A.D. called the Masoretic Text. The Scrolls of Qumran contained Old Testament documents 1000 years earlier. A comparison between the manuscripts revealed an incredible accuracy of transmission through copying, so much so that critics were silenced. When the first few scrolls were found and made public, many scholars believed them to be very good forgeries; essentially they were at first thought to be fakes. However, time and careful study showed them to be authentic. It is my primary purpose to show that the DSS are a practical apologetic tool for the modern Christian; armed with a working knowledge of their contents, even the average Christian will have answers for the skeptics...

The Word of God calls us to be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks us for the reason for the hope that is in us (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:15). From this passage we take the Greek word – *apologia*, which means a verbal defense, and the field of Christian Apologetics is founded on Holy Scripture. Hence, apologetics is the art of making a thought out, verbal defense. The DSS are extremely useful in the field of Christian Apologetics. As our world get more and more educated and complicated we Christians have a duty to also keep up with culture and educate ourselves too. The DSS documents are excellent lines of evidence because they are empirical evidence, that is, they are real things which can be seen and handled and studied. One does not need

faith to believe in the DSS simply because they exist and can be seen with our eyes. One may not believe in what they teach, but no one can deny they exist.

The Dead Sea Scrolls and their discovery has given the Christian everywhere a viable defense for believing that God has preserved His Word just as He said He would. Their use in apologetics is many; however, I wish to focus in on their use in witnessing to the historical reliability of both the Old and New Testaments. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran, beginning in 1949, had significant apologetic implications. These ancient texts, hidden in pots and other clay vessels in cliff-top caves by a monastic religious community, confirm the reliability of the Old Testament text. They provide significant portions of Old Testament books—even entire books—that were copied and studied by the Essenes.<sup>1</sup> It is thought that the Dead Sea area of Qumran, the area where the Scroll caves are located, were inhabited by a Jewish Sect known as the Essenes' from 200 B.C. to 100 A.D. Their name may derive from *Hasidim* (“loyal [or, pious] ones”). This may reflect their belief that they lived in the end times of apostasy. The evil reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century B.C. may have been the impetus for founding such a sect. Their community lasted until the second century A.D. According to Josephus (*Jewish War*, 2.8.2), the Essenes, Pharisees, and Sadducees were the primary sects of Judaism. The elder Pliny linked them with Qumran. Their life was marked by asceticism, communism, and the rejection of animal sacrifice. In New Testament times they numbered about 4000 (Cross, 471).<sup>2</sup> One thing remains

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<sup>1</sup>Geisler, Norman L.: *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, Mich. : Baker Books, 1999 (Baker Reference Library), S. 187

<sup>2</sup>Packer, James I. and White, William.: *The Bible Almanac*. Nashville, Tennessee . : Thomas Nelson Inc., 1980 (Guideposts Edition), S. 507

absolutely clear; the Essenes did not recognize the authority of the Jerusalem priesthood. As a break away sect they believed that they were living in a time period marked by apostasy and the eminent and soon arrival of the Messiah. The DSS are replete with Messianic writings and passages, this too lends to their extreme usefulness in Christian Apologetics. But why live in such a harsh desert environment like Qumran? The question is worth asking, for it bears relevance on the DSS and how one may use them in Christian Apologetics. What was the purpose of living in the wilderness compound? After all, Josephus said most Essenes lived among their fellow Jews around Israel. Why did a few of them choose to live in a remote, harsh environment surrounded by hundreds of books, separated from mainstream Judaism? The answer is hinted at in their constitution document, which is called the Rule of the Community:

When such men as theses come to be in Israel, conforming to these doctrines, they shall separate from the session of perverse men to go to the wilderness, there to prepare the way of truth, as it is written, "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isa 40:3). This means the expounding of the Law, decreed by God through Moses for obedience, that being defined by what has been revealed for each age, and by what the prophets have revealed by His holy spirit. (1QS 8:12-16)<sup>3</sup> It would appear that the founding members of the Qumran community took Isaiah's wilderness prophecy quite literally and a little bit allegorically as well. The Essenes at Qumran believed that they were preparing the way of the Messiah; none of this is far fetched or hard to believe as their community writings

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<sup>3</sup>Evans, Craig: *Holman Guide to the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Nashville, Tennessee : B&H Publishing Group, 2010, S. 219

reflect this belief. What we find in the Qumran community is an augustly devoted group of Jewish men who had separated themselves wholly to God's will and to preparing the way for the Messiah. With all conviction and no compromise, we can read the DSS and know from empirical evidences that these men were sincere in their copying of Old Testament texts. Again, with the discovery of the DSS we have an external evidence for the historical reliability of the Old Testament Scriptures that did not previously exist before their finding.

One of the first things we see with the DSS is that they contain every book of the Old Testament canon with the exception of the Book of Esther. This does not mean that the Essene community devalued or disliked this book, but rather may be that copies of Esther have not yet been found or identified. The fact that science has dated the copies of the oldest DSS manuscripts (a small fragment of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel) to 300 B.C. confirms that the Hebrew canon was closed and completed no later than 300 B.C. This one small fact leads to many other implications, such as, the dating of Daniel, a book that critical scholarship has been attacking for years. The majority of liberal scholars today do not believe that Daniel was written until 165 B.C. They believe this because of the supernatural contents of Daniel's prophetic writings. If in fact the book of Daniel was written when conservative scholars say it was, between 605 - 530 B.C. as the author (Daniel the prophet) claims it was, then the liberal scholars would have to admit that Daniel, under divine inspiration, predicted the coming of the Grecian Empire as led by Alexander the Great. However, liberal scholars are not willing to admit this as even a possibility because of their presuppositional leanings towards anti-supernaturalism. Liberal scholars are not willing to admit that Daniel was able to predict the coming of

Alexander the Great and his kingdom reign. Rather, they would like to make Daniel a historical rendering of what had already happened. In the liberal scholar's mind someone (not Daniel the prophet) in 165 B.C. was writing down what had already happened and was passing their work off as Daniel the prophet. However, there are many lines of evidence that go against this kind of reasoning and the DSS are amongst the evidence. First, if the book of Daniel was composed in 165 B.C. it is hard to believe that this writing had gained such a prominent place in the Hebrew canon in so short a period of time; the experts date the copies of Daniel found at Qumran to be from around 100 B.C. The canonical status of Daniel at Qumran is important to the date and authenticity of the book. If, as critical scholars allege, Daniel reached its final form around 160 B.C., how could it have attained canonical status at Qumran in a mere five or six decades? While we do not know exactly how it took for a book to reach such authoritative status, it appears that more time is needed for this development. Interestingly, even before the most recent publication of Daniel fragments, R.K. Harrison recognized that the canonical status of Daniel at Qumran militated against its being a composition of the Maccabean era, and served as a confirmation of its authenticity.<sup>4</sup> Eight Daniel manuscripts were found at Qumran: two in cave 1, five in cave 4, and one in cave 6. Unfortunately, none is complete due to the ravages of time, but between them they preserve a substantial amount of the book of Daniel. All eight scrolls were copied between the space of 175 years, ranging from between 125 B.C to 50 B.C.<sup>5</sup> Again, the

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<sup>4</sup> Brantley, Garry K.: *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Biblical Integrity*.  
[http:// www.apologeticspress.org/article/357](http://www.apologeticspress.org/article/357)

<sup>5</sup> Abegg, Martin; Flint, Peter and Ulrich, Eugene: *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*. New York City, New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc. , 1999, S. 482

question must be asked, how did Daniel achieve such a high place amongst the Essene's library at Qumran? It is hard to believe that the book of Daniel was recognized as a canonical book within thirty to fifty years of its writing; rather, it would appear that the Essene community valued it for some other reason – the book of Daniel lined up with their views of eschatology. There are also other lines of evidence that the DSS give us for a 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. composition of Daniel. The book of Daniel is not written in Hebrew only, it also contains large sections that were written in Aramaic; if the Essene community hated foreign rule, as their own writings tells us they did, than why would they venerate a book that was largely written in Aramaic, a foreign language? It stands to reason that the Essenes probably would have changed the books Aramaic sections and rewritten them in Hebrew, but they didn't do that; rather they copied them exactly as they were. Why? It would also appear that the members of the Qumran community had a great respect for the original text of Daniel the prophet and so they copied it to the letter. Another problem existed as well, the Aramaic sections of Daniel are written in an earlier form of 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Aramaic. The style and form of 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. Aramaic does not appear in the copies of Daniel. If the book was composed in 165 B.C. shouldn't it have been written in the Aramaic of its day? It is still quite possible that the Essene community at Qumran possessed older copies of Daniel, either archeologists have not yet found them or perhaps the Essenes wore them out and buried them in a genizah. The community had a unique way of replacing old, worn out manuscripts, instead of destroying them; they wrapped them in cloth and buried them. It would appear that the old manuscripts were rather buried than burned out of respect.



There is one last line of defense I would like to explore. It is the line of self-attestation, the book of Daniel claims to be written in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The book of Daniel, according to its own testimony, is the record of the life and prophetic revelations given to Daniel, a captive Jew carried off to Babylon after the first conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. The record of events extends to the third year of Cyrus, 536 B.C., and, accordingly, covers a span of about seventy years. Daniel himself may well have lived on to about 530 B.C., and the book of Daniel was probably completed in the last decade of his life.<sup>6</sup> If Daniel the prophet did not write this book than how is it possible that so many details could have been preserved for over four hundred years? Even though critical scholars will not admit that an early date for the book of Daniel is possible, it is still what makes the most sense when all the evidence is compared and the Dead Sea Scrolls lend much support to an early date.

The controversy over the date of the book of Daniel is not the only thing the DSS help to explain. The DSS also shed light on the over all historical reliability of the entire Old Testament. Until the discovery of the DSS the earliest manuscripts of the Old Testament were the Masoretic texts which dated from around 900 A.D. to 1100 A.D. What this means is that the DSS are Old Testament copies that are 1,000 years older than the Masoretic texts. For years many critics of the Bible have claimed that the Old Testament writings were changed many times over and that Christians have especially been guilty of changing the texts to fit Jesus Christ into the Old Testament. The question is, is there any validity in this question? Critics and skeptics claim that the Bible has been changed over time to make prophecies about the coming Messiah fit the life

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<sup>6</sup>Walvoord, John F.: *Daniel: The Key To Prophetic Revelation*. Galaxie Software, 2008; 2008, S. 11

and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. One book found among the DSS that helps put this argument to bed is the book of Isaiah. In cave 1 two copies of Isaiah were found and some 18 fragments were found in cave 4. One of the copies found in cave 1, known as the Great Isaiah Scroll, is completely intact and contains the entire book of Isaiah with the exception of a few missing words. When compared with the Masoretic text of 900 A.D. the DSS copy of Isaiah and the Masoretic text are 95% in agreement. This fact alone shows us that the manuscripts of Isaiah which the Masoretic scholars copied are in perfect harmony with copies 1,000 years older than them. The suffering servant of Isaiah 53 is written centuries before Jesus of Nazareth is even tried and sentenced to death by crucifixion. The prophecy of Isaiah 9:6 reads, "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *His* government and peace *there will be* no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."<sup>7</sup> There can be no clearer Old Testament prophecy which speaking of God coming in the flesh than that of Isaiah 9:6 – the prophet refers to the Child as the Mighty God, Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace. These three titles in particular are all titles of Deity. Let us therefore look at each one separately. That the Child would be called Mighty God is an undeniably fact towards His Deity, for no other leader in Israel's history has been called God. In the original Hebrew it reads El Gibbor, El is one of the oldest Hebrew terms for God and is used most often in the books of Genesis, Job,

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<sup>7</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Is 9:6-7

Psalms and Isaiah. The word Gibbor is an adjective meaning brave, strong or mighty. It was often used in reference to warriors, heroes and champions in battle.<sup>8</sup> It would appear that the Child is to be called El Gibbor because He will save His people. Next, the coming Child would also be called the Everlasting Father. In the original Hebrew it is actually more literal to translate the title as the Father over eternity, however, Everlasting Father is still considered a good translation as it retains the same basic idea. The promised Child of Isaiah 9:6 is going to be the Everlasting Father, how could this be possible? The only possibility is that the coming Child is somehow God. Many of the ancient Rabbis believed that the coming Messiah of Israel would in fact be the Son of God. Lastly, the Child would be called the Prince of Peace. Many theologians would not see this as a claim to Deity, however, if one follows the text carefully one can see that this Child is to be the Prince of Peace because His rule and the peace He brings will never and come to an end. None of this bears and special significance unless these words appear in the DSS copies of Isaiah and I am happy to report that they do appear in the Qumran scrolls. Again, when we compare the DSS copies of Isaiah with the Masoretic text we find that they are over 95% in agreement with one another. The five percent disagreement comes mostly in the form of spelling differences and minor stylistic changes; no major doctrines are affected or changed.

The unity of the book of Isaiah is also something that critical scholars are often quick to denounce. Much of academia today believes that the book of Isaiah was written by more than one author. They claim that the book has too many stylistic changes throughout its entire course and that this is an indication that it was written by two or

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<sup>8</sup>Baker, Warren and Carpenter, Eugene: *The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishing 2003 S. 179

more different authors. Do the DSS documents lend any arguments towards the unity of Isaiah? Yes, they do, but first we need to understand just what the critics are saying. The view that a single author wrote Isaiah was challenged by Jewish writers as early as the second century A.D. (Moses Ibn Gekatilla), and later by the leading medieval scholar Ibn Ezra (1092 – 1167). Multiple authorship was proposed by “Christian” scholars in the late 1700s (J.C. Doderlein and J.G. Eichhorn) on basis of literary-critical studies. The theory (now assumed as fact) has since enjoyed an almost universal consensus among critical scholars.<sup>9</sup> The critical scholars claim that there is a clear literary break in between Isaiah chapter 39 and 40, thus the first thirty-nine chapters were written by one author and chapters 40 through 66 were written by a different author. Thus when the DSS were discovered and the Great Isaiah scroll was examined many scholars had hoped it would prove their dual author theory. However, the evidence they had hoped for was not found, true the Great Isaiah scrolls showed a separation in the text but it was between chapter 33 and 34. Experts believe that the scribe either spilt the scroll perfectly in two or that he was trying to show that the original from which he was copying was comprised of two separate scrolls. This “gap” in the text may indicate a scribe’s awareness of an original composition change, rather than simply a change in scribes or manuscripts.<sup>10</sup> The most probable answer for this difficult problem proposed by many leading DSS experts is this: it is very likely that the Great Isaiah scroll was the communities study version as attested to by the many scribal

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<sup>9</sup> Price, Randall. *Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls*: Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1996, S. 154

<sup>10</sup>Harrison, R.K.: *The Dead Sea Scrolls: An introduction*. New York, NY. :Harper and brothers publishing , 1961, S. 63

marginal notations. If 1QIs<sup>a</sup> (the Great Isaiah Scroll) was a study version, then that would add weight to the argument for scribal recognition and identification of textual discrepancies.<sup>11</sup> Professor Emanuel Tov has added great insight into scribal notation theory; the following quotation was taken from an interview with Professor Tov: “We find a few hundred of what I call scribal signs in the Scrolls. There are signs in new paragraphs, signs in order to fill up the end of the line, and signs that say “be careful, there is something in this text that I don’t exactly understand what it means but I’m sure that at the time [the original authors] knew.” Some of these signs are in the ancient script, [while] others are signs we do not yet understand. We see this both in the text and in the margin of the text, and in a few occasions, at least three or four; we have writing in red ink which is quite unusual. In one Scroll this marks the beginning of new paragraphs, and in a Scroll of the Psalter this is for the beginning of a new song. There are many more small details in which these scribes showed their understanding of the written text.”<sup>12</sup> Following the advice and expertise of Professor Tov we find nothing special in the Great Isaiah Scroll. There is nothing to indicate that the scribes at Qumran believed that their copies of Isaiah had several different authors, rather the opposite is true. A second line of evidence outside of the DSS exists; the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament which was translated in 275 B.C. is in agreement with the DSS. The Scrolls of Isaiah found at Qumran provide us with sufficient evidence that Isaiah was written by one author just as Jesus our Lord attested to in the Gospels.

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<sup>11</sup>Price, Randall. *Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls*: Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1996, S. 156

<sup>12</sup>Tov, Emanuel: *An interview at the Hebrew University*, Jerusalem . November 7<sup>th</sup> , 1995

The DSS can be used to show and add validity to the New Testament writings as well. Even though no New Testament writings were found among the DSS with the possibility of a small fragment of Mark, they still offer a significant insight into the writing of the New Testament documents. Professor David Flusser, an Israeli scholar who has a deep knowledge of the New Testament writings offers us an interesting insight into the Gospels and other New Testament epistles. In his book, "The Judean Desert Scrolls and the Beginning of Christianity," he offers this helpful advice: "In light of the discovery of the Scrolls, it has been definitely established that Greek influence on early Christianity was but weak, for most of the concepts in the New Testament previously thought to stem from pagan thought are now found to originate with a Jewish Sect and in a most definitely Jewish context."<sup>13</sup> Since it is a fact that the DSS do not mention Jesus Christ or any other New Testament characters many Biblical scholars are convinced that the DSS and the New Testament do not have anything in common and they therefore the Scrolls do not bear any relevance on the New Testament writings. Although there are not many places where the DSS and the New Testament lineup word for word or thought for thought, there are many places where inferences and illusions can be found. The DSS had a figure in their community's history that they referred to as the "Teacher of Righteousness" the overwhelming majority of DSS scholars believe the teacher to have been an actual person and not a made up figure. In similar fashion Jesus Christ is the ultimate Teacher of Righteousness – the One who stepped out of the space/time continuum, who Himself was God and just as the

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<sup>13</sup>Flusser, David: *The Judean Desert Scrolls and the Beginning of Christianity*. 1996, S. 2

community at Qumran listen to their “Teacher of Righteousness” so we should listen to and obey ours.

The Beatitudes are probably among the most well known teachings of Jesus; even people outside of Christendom have some idea of the what are contained in them. In the Beatitudes Jesus offered up good news for those followers of His who were humble, pure, meek, hungry for righteousness, merciful, and those who were peacemakers. These teachings of Jesus Christ have been cherished by Christians everywhere for literally centuries. Outside of the Gospels we had no Old Testament references to the Beatitudes and other similar parabolic teaching of Jesus; however, with the discovery of the DSS we find similar Beatitude-like writings. One such text is 4Q525 which reads: [Blessed is the one...] with a clean heart and does not slander with his tongue. Blessed are those who hold fast to its statutes and do not hold fast to the ways of injustice. Blessed are those who rejoice in it, and do not burst forth on paths of folly. Blessed are those who seek it with pure hands, and do not search for it with a deceitful heart. Blessed is the man who attains wisdom, and walks in the law of the Most High: establishes his heart in its way, restrains himself by its corrections, is continually satisfied with its punishment , does not forsake it in the face of [his] trials, at the time of distress he does not abandon it, does not forget it [in the day] of terror, and in the humility of his soul he does not abhor it. But he meditates on it continually, and in his trial he reflects [on the law, and with all] his being [he gains understanding] in it, [and he establishes it] before his eyes so as not to walk in the ways [of injustice, and ...] together, [...] and kept his heart fixed on it. You place a crown of gold upon his head

and with kings You shall seat him. (4Q525 frag. 2 col. 2) <sup>14</sup> When comparing 4Q525 with the Sermon on the Mount the parallels are striking. Our Lord Jesus spoke of those who were “pure in heart” in verse 8 of Matthew chapter five. 4Q525 speaks of those who are “pure in heart” and who possess “pure hands.” Early in the Sermon of the Mount Jesus spoke of those who “hunger after righteousness” while the 4Q525 fragment spoke of those who “avoided injustice” which could easily be understood as men who avoided unrighteousness, the wording of the passage is close enough to make a tie in. And lastly, 4Q525 refers to the righteous man being seated “with kings” while Jesus spoke of the person, who being persecuted for righteousness sake, having a great reward in heaven. Fragment 4Q525 promised the righteous man a place with kings, while Jesus promised us that we would have a place in heaven with the King of kings. This is just one example of where the DSS shed light on some of Jesus’ sayings and teachings. It would appear that many of the DSS were penned before the incarnational ministry of our Lord Jesus; in other cases the DSS documents may have arisen after the Jesus’ time as some of the DSS manuscripts date to 100 A.D. Either way, the DSS texts bear relevance and help us understand the New Testament writings in their historic context. Whereas the DSS often refer to law keeping and harsh judgment, Jesus Christ spoke of the forgiveness of sin and the fact that His followers would not be judged in the world to come. Even with this being the case, the DSS help us show that Jesus’ teachings were in fact Hebraic in their nature.

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<sup>14</sup>Wise, Michael; Abegg, Martin and Cook, Edward : *The Dead Sea Scrolls : A New Translation* . New York City, New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc. , 1996, S. 424



The DSS also help us understand other important New Testament persons as well. For years scholars and historians have debated whether or not John the Baptist was an Essene. Before anyone dismisses the possibility the facts needed to be properly weighted. John's ministry was one of preparing the way for the Messiah. Much in the same way the Essene community at Qumran saw themselves as preparing the way of the Messiah, it is for this very purpose that they withdrew from society and studied in the Judean wilderness. John was called "the Baptist" for a good reason; everywhere he went he called people to submit unto a baptism of repentance for their sins. Not that John offered the forgiveness of sins, but rather that Israelites came and acknowledged their sins unto God. John's baptism was one of repentance, he was attempting to turn the people's hearts back to the Father. In a different but similar fashion the Essene community was highly concerned with a ritual form of baptism. The Qumran settlement had more than one baptism pool known as a mikvah. According to their own sectarian writings, the members of the community would bath in cold water several times a day to purify themselves. It would appear that the Essene community held a different view of baptism than that which John administered. John's baptism was one that showed people were ready to change, the mikvahs at Qumran were used for purification rituals. There are other interesting comparisons that can be made about John the Baptist and the Qumran community. The Essene's left society and voluntarily lived out in the Judean wilderness. John also by choice lived in the Judean wilderness eating locusts and wild honey, but this does not necessarily make John a member of the Essenes. So how can the DSS be used to make an apologetic defense for the existence of John the Baptist one may ask? Simply in that they show that what John the Baptist was doing

was also done by an earlier Sect of Judaism. The Qumran community linked baptism with ritual purity. John the Baptist linked baptism with a willingness to repent, both were outward performances utilizing the cleansing nature of water. The desert was often looked at as a place where one went to become spiritually tested and prepared. Moses spent forty years in the Midian wilderness in order to deliver the Children of Israel from Pharaoh. In turn Moses and the Children of Israel spent forty years wandering in the wilderness. Even Jesus our Lord was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested for the period of forty days. All of these examples show that the desert was a place of preparation. The Essenes knew this and John acted upon this notion as well.

The last area I wish to cover is that of New Testament manuscripts found at Qumran. Whereas no New Testament writings have been identified beyond the shadow of a doubt, several Greek manuscripts were found in cave 7. One of these small fragments known as 7Q5 has been shown to possibly be Mark 6:52 and if this true than the Gospel of Mark would have to have been written prior to 68 A.D. An even earlier date make sense since the Gospel would have to of been taken to the Essene community prior to 68 A.D. when the Romans attacked the settlement. Although many good scholars do not believe the fragment to be Mark 6:52 it has not yet been completely ruled out. The fact that cave 7 yielded several Greek fragmentary documents proves that the Qumran community possessed Greek manuscripts and that is proof enough to postulate that New Testament writings may have existed at Qumran.

The DSS writings prove to be the most valuable archeological find of the twentieth century. Their use in Christian Apologetics is many, but to name a few we saw that they are a window into the past, dating all the way back to 250 B.C. or later. They show us

the meticulous way the Qumran scribes preserved the Old Testament manuscripts so that when compared with copies 1,100 years older they proved to be 95% in agreement. The DSS manuscripts shed light on the validity of highly contested Old Testament prophetic books such as Isaiah and Daniel. Critical scholars say one thing about them and yet the DSS say quite something different. The Scrolls also give us a look into the New Testament times and writings as well. The Scrolls discovered at Qumran even help give insight into the teachings of Jesus our Lord. The amazing thing to consider is this, many Scrolls have not yet even been translated. What may the DSS have to offer us in the future? We will have to just be patient and see...

