

What about other ancient texts?

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has greatly enhanced our understanding of the Hebrew Bible's history and the variety of Jewish literature during the Second Temple period. Among about 900 manuscripts found at Qumran, around 40% are Hebrew Scripture copies, while roughly 30% are other religious writings. These include works like *Tobit* and *Sirach* (later called the *Apocrypha*) and books like *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* (classified as *Pseudepigrapha*), as well as texts unique to the Qumran community.

Although these non-canonical texts were read and valued by some Jewish groups, several clues suggest that the Qumran community distinguished them from authoritative Scripture. Books like *Psalms*, *Deuteronomy*, and *Isaiah* appear in far more copies, showing their central role. Even popular writings like *Jubilees* never reached the prominence of the biblical books.

The community did not have a fixed canon identical to the later Masoretic Text but showed clear reverence for certain books. Biblical texts were usually copied on higher-quality parchment with greater care, reflecting their sacred status. Other writings, though carefully copied, often show less uniformity.

The so-called Gnostic gospels, such as *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Gospel of Philip*, and *The Gospel of Judas*, stand in sharp contrast to the New Testament. Unlike the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—written in the first century by eyewitnesses or their associates—the Gnostic texts appeared later, mostly in the second and third centuries AD. They reflect Gnostic philosophy, teaching salvation through secret knowledge rather than through Christ's death and resurrection. These writings often distort Christian doctrine, denying Christ's humanity and presenting a different God. Early leaders like Irenaeus and Tertullian rightly rejected them as heretical. Discoveries like the Nag Hammadi library (1945) have provided access to these texts, but their late origins and contradictions with New Testament teachings confirm they are not reliable sources. Instead, they reveal the spiritual counterfeits the early church had to confront.

The Qur'an, regarded by Muslims as God's final revelation, was compiled in the seventh century AD, centuries after the Bible's completion. According to Islamic tradition, Muhammad received it over 23 years. While the Qur'an mentions figures like Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, it presents them in a very different theological context. Key Christian beliefs—the divinity of Christ, the Trinity, and His atoning death and resurrection—are explicitly denied. Historical evidence shows the Qur'an arose in a distinct religious setting, influenced by Jewish, Christian, and Arabian traditions. Unlike the Bible, written by dozens of authors over a millennium with abundant manuscript support, the Qur'an was compiled by a small group soon after Muhammad's death, with limited early witnesses. Though deeply important to Muslims today, its theological differences and later origin show that it is distinct from the Bible and not a continuation of biblical revelation as Christians understand it.

ANCIENT WORLDS *of the* BIBLE

Study Guide 2

by Pastor Daniel McFeeters

Ancient Texts, Speaking Stones

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls between 1947 and 1956 in the caves near Qumran stands as one of the most significant archaeological finds supporting the authenticity of the Old Testament. Before their discovery, many scholars argued that the Old Testament texts had been heavily altered over centuries and that books like Daniel were written much later than traditionally believed—during the 2nd century BC—rather than in the 6th century BC as the text itself claims. This skepticism cast doubt on the reliability of prophetic passages and the historical faithfulness of the Bible.

However, the Dead Sea Scrolls radically changed this discussion. Among the scrolls, nearly every Old Testament book was found, including fragments of Daniel. These Daniel manuscripts were dated to the second century BC—meaning they had to have been written even earlier than that. The presence of Daniel at Qumran demonstrates that the book was already widely accepted and circulated by that time, not a newly composed document as critics had claimed.

Moreover, the textual accuracy of the Scrolls is stunning. Comparing the Isaiah Scroll, for example, with the Masoretic Text (the basis for most modern Old Testaments) shows remarkable preservation over a thousand years of copying. Differences are minimal and largely stylistic, not doctrinal.

Thus, the Dead Sea Scrolls provide strong, tangible evidence that the Old Testament texts were transmitted with extraordinary faithfulness. They reinforce traditional claims about the antiquity and integrity of the Scriptures, affirm the historical reliability of prophetic books like Daniel, and support the belief that the Bible has been preserved by divine providence, not corrupted by human invention. For believers, the Scrolls are a powerful witness that God's Word has endured unchanged, just as He promised.

"I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."
(Luke 19:40)

The King's Dream (Daniel 2)

"And He changes the times and the seasons;
He removes kings and raises up kings;
He gives _____ to the wise
And _____ to those who have understanding.
(Daniel 2:21)

Read Daniel 2:31-35

King Nebuchadnezzar saw a great image in his dream.
What was this image made from?

Head _____
Chest/Arms _____
Belly/Thighs _____
Legs _____
Feet _____ & _____

How did Daniel interpret this image to the king?

"You O King, are a king of kings.... You are this head of
_____. But after you shall arise another
_____ inferior to yours; then
_____." (v. 37-39)

*Bible prophecy is fulfilled through history
Each of these metals represented a worldwide ruling
kingdom that would conquer the previous kingdom. If we
look in history, we find these conquering world powers:*

- Neo-Babylon Empire (601BC - 539BC)
- Medo-Persian Empire (539BC - 331BC)
- Greek Empire (331BC - 168 BC)
- Roman Empire (168BC - 146AD)

*The Roman Empire was never conquered by another world power. Instead, it broke
apart and barbarian tribes formed the divided European countries, some weak and
others strong. v. 43 states that they would even try to intermarry, but would not
succeed in uniting these nations into one kingdom. Throughout
history, would-be emperors of Europe have failed time and again to
unite these divided countries.*

Scan this code or visit the link to hear the incredible story of Franz
Hasel and how this ancient dream saved many lives during WWII:
www.pastordaniel.net/daniel-2

What did the stone do and what kingdom does it represent?? (v. 34-35, 44)



What the Bible Says About Itself

- It is a lamp (Psalm 119:105)
- It is pure and trustworthy (Proverbs 30:5-6)
- It is spiritual bread (Matthew 4:4)
- It testifies about Jesus who gives eternal life (John 5:39)
- It cannot be broken (John 10:35)
- It gives knowledge, patience, comfort, and hope (Romans 15:4)
- It is sharper than a sword (Hebrews 4:12)
- It is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16)

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

SCRIPTURE: "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing,
Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the _____." (Amos 3:7)

REFLECTION:

There are many ancient texts in this world, but no other ancient text, besides
the Bible, is able to accurately predict the history of the world before it takes
place. What does this tell you about the God of the Bible? Why would He
desire to reveal the future to us? (see Isaiah 46:9-10, 2 Peter 1:19-21, John
13:19, John 14:29, Revelation 1:1, Deuteronomy 29:29)

EXPERIENCE: "Can you think of a time when trusting what God said —
even when you couldn't see how it would happen — gave you strength,
hope, or direction? What happened?"

QUESTION: Notice how all of the prophecies in the king's dream (Daniel 2)
have been fulfilled except one: the coming stone of God's eternal kingdom.
How does that make you feel?

RESPONSE: Are you willing to you believe and follow
the teachings of the Bible? Why or why not?

