

## The Top Five Archaeological Finds Related to the New Testament

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### Introduction:

Some archaeological finds relate to the Bible as a whole. This is especially true of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These five illustrate the world and personalities of the NT and each of them were originally written or made during the broad period of the NT and its background world (250 BC - 70 AD).

#### 1. The Dead Sea Scrolls

This term refers to over 800 manuscripts, varying from small scraps to full copies of entire books that were found near the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea between 1947 and the early 1960's. Most are copies of OT books in Hebrew or Aramaic and Greek, but there are a large number also of sectarian documents. These were most probably copied by members of a Jewish sect that lived nearby called the Essenes. The community was active from approximately 150 BC until the Roman conquest of the land around 68 AD.

The oldest copies of OT books date from possibly 250 BC, and were brought with the group when they settled at a place called Qumran. Most of the other books were composed or copied in their "scriptorium" in the first century BC or AD.

Scrolls were found in eleven caves near Qumran, but Cave 1 and Cave 4 were the most important caves for providing manuscript discoveries. Most of the scroll discoveries were made by \_\_\_\_\_, not by archaeologists.

Cave 1 : Two scrolls of Isaiah (one complete); a scroll of Habakkuk with commentary; an Aramaic paraphrase of Genesis; Psalm type Songs; a Manual of Discipline; an apocalyptic War of Sons of Light and Darkness.

Cave 4: Many sectarian documents; scraps of over 500 Biblical scrolls. This appears to be the main library of the community.

#### Value:

Oldest OT manuscripts – 1000 years older than any copies we had previously known.

Occasionally preserve an older reading – cf. Isaiah 53:11 “see \_\_\_\_\_”

One text mentions a “\_\_\_\_\_ Messiah.”

## 2. The Sea of Galilee Boat

As is the case with so many of the most significant discoveries, the boat was discovered “accidentally,” not in a supervised archaeological dig. In 1986, two brothers from Kibbutz Nof Ginnosar were exploring a section of the lake after a severe draught had caused the waters to recede. What they found impacted in the mud was a first century fishing boat – something that had never been previously found. After it was “rescued,” it was treated for years and then mounted in the museum at the kibbutz.

Its size and features resemble mosaic portrayals of boats from that time. Dating techniques also established its date to the first century.

Was it a boat used by Jesus or His disciples?

Was it sunk in a “naval battle” near there in 67 AD?

## 3. Pontius Pilate Inscription

Although known to readers of the NT and Josephus, no inscription mentioning Pilate was ever known to exist until a broken inscription was found in the \_\_\_\_\_ of Caesarea Maritima. It was originally part of an inscription on a building in Caesarea during Pilate’s rule there (26-36 AD).

## 4. Ossuary of Caiaphas

During NT times, the bones of deceased were placed in “bone boxes” called ossuaries. South of Jerusalem, the family tomb of Caiaphas, head of the Sanhedrin during Jesus’ ministry, was excavated in the 1990’s. One ossuary had Caiaphas’ name scratched on the outside.

Note on the “James Ossuary” . . . (“Ya’akov bar Yosef, Achui d’Yeshua”)

## 5. Ankle Bone of a Crucified Man

The first physical evidence of crucifixion was found in an ossuary on Mt Scopus - the ankle bone of a young male with an iron spike imbedded in it.

This discovery helps us to understand better exactly how a crucifixion took place.