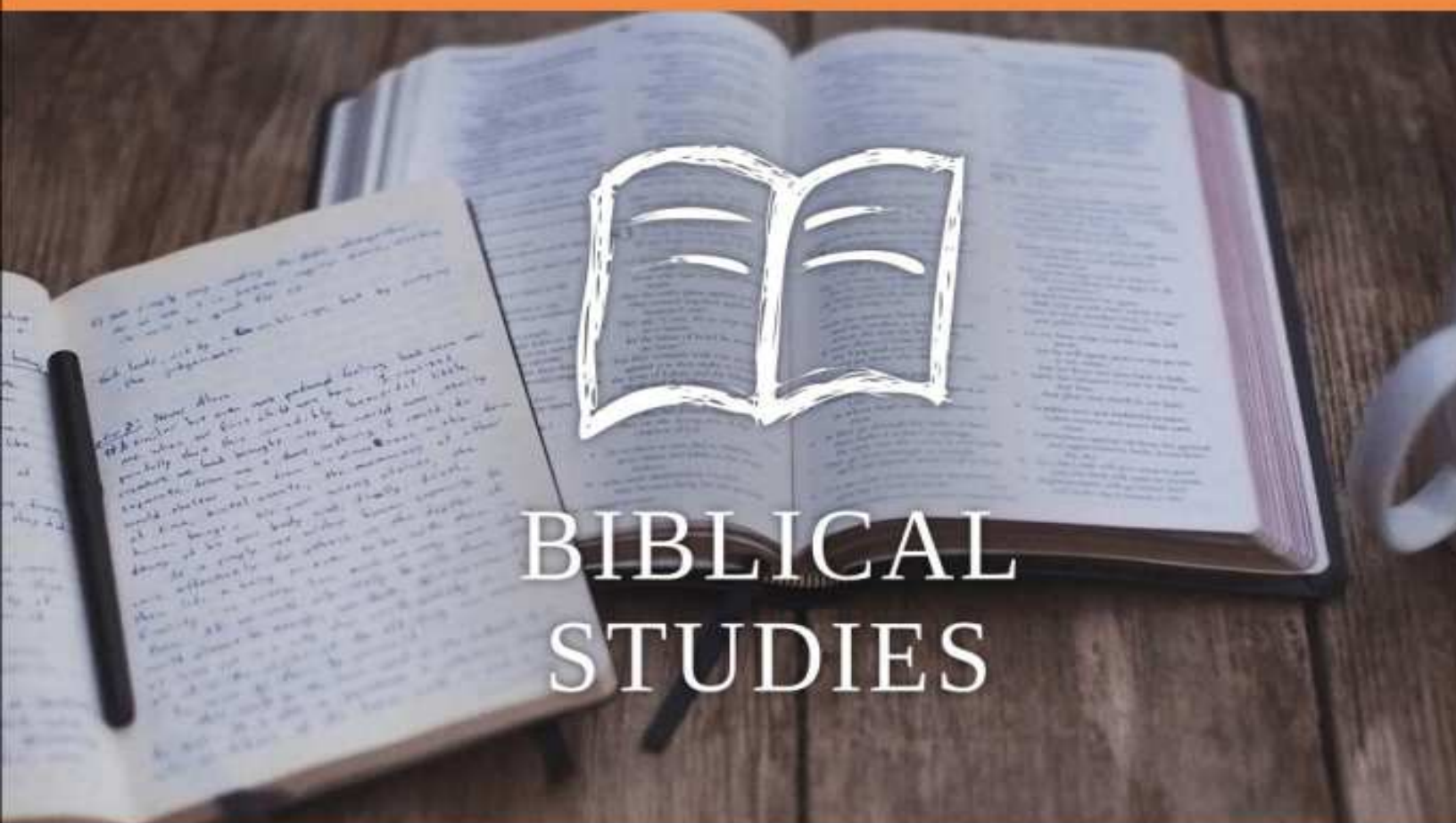


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THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS AND ITS IMPACT ON LUKE-ACTS

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Abstract

It seems that the impact of the Dead Sea Scrolls on the New Testament, and particularly the writings of Luke is awesome. The paper explores how the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has influenced the understanding of the Gospels and the entire Scripture, as well as the potential connection between the Qumran community and the events and characters in Luke-Acts. The author examines various parallels and interactions between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the writings of Luke, such as the similarities in language, themes, and concepts. The paper suggests that there may be a relationship between the two, considering Luke's thorough investigation of "all things" before writing.

Keywords: *Dead Sea Scrolls, Qumran community, and Essenes.*

Introduction

Since the first discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 in the sectarian community of Qumran of the Judean desert, the New Testament and in particular the writings of Luke have been significantly impacted by some of these manuscripts. According to Mika Pajunen, since the first discovery, about one thousand manuscripts have been discovered out of which 210 contain texts from compositions now found in the Hebrew Bible that indirectly speak of the life of Jesus and the early Church (7). VanderKam and Flint on the other hand assert that almost 900 manuscripts have been discovered so far out of which 670 are nonbiblical scrolls and about 222 are connected to the Scripture "which of course, include the life of Jesus and the growth of the early church" (127, 399). Scholars have offered a wide range of views as to how these manuscripts impact the New Testament. For instance, Vanderkam and Flint allude that some scholars, though they are in the minority assume, "the scrolls are in fact Christian texts – if only we knew how to read them properly – or that several of these documents contain references to Jesus and new revelations about his life" (388). They maintained that

Josev O'Callaghan "claimed that nine Greek fragments found in Cave 7 contain portions of six New Testament books: Mark, Acts, Romans, 1 Timothy, James, and 2 Peter." On the other hand, most scholars claim that "the scrolls are of indirect relevance to Jesus and early Christianity, but that they illuminate many aspects of Jesus' life and teaching and many events and doctrines of the New Testament" (376, 388). They argue that a careful assessment of the Dead Sea Scrolls shows that none of the manuscripts mention any New Testament characters by name and were not written by "Christian authors" (388). Cecilia Wassen on the other hand, contends that the importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for the study of historical Jesus cannot be overstated even though there is no clear indication that Jesus had contact with the members of the Qumran movement (280). Furthermore, VanderKam and Flint state that the Dead Sea Scrolls contributed immensely to the understanding of the Gospels and by extension the entire Scripture in the following ways:

- (1) providing helpful information about Jewish society, groups, practices, and beliefs at the time;
- (2) increasing our knowledge about early

Judaism, which makes it clear that many aspects of the Gospel message are indebted to the mother religion; (3) helping us see in sharper outline some of the basic differences between the message of Jesus and that of other Jewish groups; and (4) providing new texts with wording similar to certain Gospel passages, which shows that some or much of Jesus' teaching was anticipated in earlier texts, rather than being the product of the later church (388).

There seem to be some similarities between the Gospels and some of Israel's traditions found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is against this background that VanderKam and Flint argue that "Jesus took over a manner of speaking rooted in Israel's wisdom tradition and gave it his eschatological spin" (409). Corroborating this view, Wassen states that "the scrolls provide a Window into the Jewish world with a common apocalyptic outlook shared by Jesus and his disciples who were Jews – a worldview characterized by the belief that they were living at the end of the present era, in the last days" (281). This paper is therefore designed to investigate the impact of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Luke-Acts.

The Impact of DSS on Luke-Acts

Some modern scholars have attempted to establish a connection between the "Temple cleansing" events mentioned in all the four canonical Gospels (Matt 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46; John 2:13-17) with the activities of the Qumran community during the Second Temple period. This pericope found in Luke 19:45-46 is considered historical by a vast majority of scholars even though they differ considerably in interpreting Jesus' action (Wassen 281). Some argue that Jesus' action was symbolically envisaging the destruction of Jerusalem, while others argue that Jesus' action was a protest against the priestly corruption that had become so rampant in the temple during the time of Christ (Wassen 284). This was perhaps the same corruption that the Qumran sectarian abhorred that caused them to withdraw from nonmembers and seek a separate community of their own.

Although during the Second Temple period, there was little significance attached to sacrifices in the temple, however, there was a heavy connection that existed between the temple and the observance of the purity laws which could also determine the kind of businesses to be carried out in and around the temple. Wassen argues further that Craig Evans reinforces his view that there were alleged cases of corruption against the temple priests in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Pseudepigrapha and that could have probably formed the background of Jesus' protest against the commercial activities taking place in the temple precincts (286). Eyal Regev on the other hand offers a different twist by drawing from a Qumran text to suggest that for Jesus the money symbolizes "the corrupted wealth" that polluted the temple in Jerusalem which in every case was "morally defiling" especially as the money is being taken from the poor to enrich the rich (399). However, there is a need to exercise caution not to read too much meaning into the text as Jesus knows better the hearts of all men and that could have informed his action (beyond the mere speculations many hold today) in the temple cleansing. According to Andrew B. Perrin, "There are at least seven items proposed in recent scholarship that reveal a surprisingly well-traveled road between Lukan material and the intellectual world of Aramaic writings found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Four of these converge in Luke's early chapters on the birth, presentation, and genealogy of Jesus" (444).

To begin with, Perrin states, "Bauckham established the Enochic character of both the numerical scheme and named figures included in Jesus' genealogy in Luke 3:23-38" (444). He goes on to state that Bauckham added that "the author of the Lukan genealogy must have been inspired by 1 En 10:12, but he will also have found elsewhere in the Enoch literature a model for a scheme of periodizing world history in units of seven generations [1 En 93:3-10; 91:11-17]" (444). Again, Perrin asserts that there seems to exist an interaction of a sort between the so-called Aramaic "Son of God" found in the Aramaic text, 4Q246, and the angelic revelation announced to

Mary in Luke 1:32-35 (444). Corroborating this view, Kuhn equally argues that “the author of 4Q246 drew from Daniel 7 and that Luke in some fashion made use of the Aramaic Apocalypse in composing Luke 1:31b-35” (24). His view greatly agrees with Collins that the close “parallels between 4Q246 and Luke 1:31b-35 make it difficult to avoid the conclusion that Luke is dependent in some way, whether directly or indirectly, on this long lost text from Qumran” (32). Perrin was, however, quick to reiterate that “we cannot say whether this is perchance a coincidental use by Luke of Palestinian Jewish titles known to him or indicates Lukan dependence on 4Q246, as argued by Collins” (444).

Other areas of parallels indicating an idea of interaction between the Dead Sea scrolls materials and Lukane writings include terms and themes such as (a) the phrasing of Zechariah’s angelic encounter in Luke 1:19 and Tob 12:5; (b) the similarity between Luke 2:29 and Tob 11:9 that features Simeon remarks at the dedication of Jesus at the temple and Anna exclaims at the homecoming of her son, Tobias; (c) the similar narrative and terminologies of healing or exorcism found in Luke 4:40-41 and the account of healing of the crippled woman in Luke 13:10-13 are likely informed by the account of Genesis Apocryphon (1Q20 20:29); (d) the expression of the concept of sin as debt found in Luke 11:4 was likely ubiquitous in the Aramaic literature (Dan 4:27; Tob 4: 4-11; 12:8-10; 14:8-11); and (e) the use of some phrases found in Luke’s writings such as “the sons of lights” and “the eternal home,” a duality language such as this indicates “a core part of Hebrew, largely insider literature of Qumran” community (445–47).

Another connection between the Dead Sea Scrolls and Luke-Acts is the prophetic fulfilment concerning the messenger who was to be sent to prepare the way for the Messiah. John the Baptizer was the messenger. Some scholars have linked him to the Qumran community. The scholars with this view allude that John the Baptizer was an Essene and has his descent from the Qumran community. They often time justify

this by the use of the phrase, *ejplhvsqh pneuvmato~aJgivou* (“filled with the Holy Spirit”) found only in Luke’s corpus [Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 4:1; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 7:55; 9:17; and 13:9, 52.] (Jamal Hopkins 433). Hopkins argues that John was described as “righteous” and “blameless” (Luke 1:6), a pietistic life that could have been influenced by the Essene community (433). It is worthy of note that the Qumran community could have consisted of the Essenes but it would be wrong to say that they were exclusively Essenes sect merely to justify the point that John was an Essene and hence, he was from the Qumran community. VanderKam and Flint posit that there seem to exist striking similarities between the first Christian community in Jerusalem as portrayed in Acts and the Essene fellowship as pictured in the Qumran scrolls (Acts 2:44-46; 4:32-35). The practice of pooling resources together for the common good is a prominent point of comparison between the Qumran community and the first-century church in Jerusalem (420–21).

Conclusion

The similarity of words and phrases common to some of the Dead Sea Scrolls texts and Luke-Acts suggests a seeming interaction among them. This conclusion is highly probable considering Luke’s claim that he had taken it upon himself to carefully investigate “all things” from the very beginning before writing. His determination to investigate “all things” could have taken him beyond the inspired works into other historical and literary works of ancient literature including but not limited to the works of the sectarian Qumran community.

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