

This article was originally written for *The Good news Newspaper*.  
Adapted for this Newsletter.

Stones and Scriptures Seminar  
by  
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A 1611 First Edition King James Bible sat on the table, open to a section entitled



“Apocrypha.”

Far to the right, a handful of silver coins dating to the days of Jesus Christ looked not unlike coins of today.



A box of

cuneiform tablet pieces held messages over two thousand years old. Several scrolls of incredible antiquity lay open to show scripture which had been painstakingly copied by scribes. Printed books dated within four years of Gutenberg rested atop each other.

These precious artifacts, worth over two million dollars, were generously displayed by Dr. Scott Carroll during his seminar on biblical archeology. The presentation answered questions about how the Bible came to be, how we can trust its authenticity, and how modern archeological findings consistently verify Biblical accounts.



In an interview for The Good News, Dr. Scott Carroll PhD, Professor of History at Cornerstone University, spoke about the questions he had when he first came to faith as an undergraduate. His faith journey led him to his mentor who was an expert in church history, Gnosticism, languages, and archeology. Putting these disciplines together formed Dr. Carroll's mission.

He commented on the quote, "You've heard it said, 'If you forget history, you're condemned to repeat it,' but I tell you, if you forget church history, you're condemned."

Scott explained that God has been with His church throughout history. Many have contributed to its truths, from Aquinas to Luther and when someone tries to re-invent the wheel, not looking to what has already been passed down, heresy occurs. He believes that today's church is in its darkest hour because Satan uses ignorance of the past to

introduce old heresies dotted with modern ideas to discredit God's Word. He maintained that church councils served the church by confirming truths that had been passed down through the centuries.

"It (work of the councils) was a pronouncement of what had been done, not what must be done. If you begin to say councils are bad, you begin to raise questions about the divinity of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, the canon of scripture and on and on. All of a sudden, if you throw those things out, you're in trouble fast."

Professor Carroll's weapon is knowledge. He said he approaches his discipline as a pagan scientist would, looking only at hard data and evidence. Unlike other sciences, "archeology has the unrepeatability experiment."

The site of one of his current "unrepeatability experiments" is Wadi Natrum in Egypt. Carroll and his team return here every year to excavate 1 ½ square miles that comprise an ancient Coptic monastery and burial site dating back to the early church. Based on the extent of burial remains, it is estimated about 45,000 men had lived there. He hopes he will find manuscripts dating to before the 5th century. According to the professor, only 1% of potential archeological sites in Iraq are being explored. Less than 1% has been excavated in Israel.

Most people know about the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered between 1947 and 1956 in caves around the Qumran. These scrolls revealed that estimated dates of manuscripts can go further back than we thought, as far back as around 250 BC – 70AD. "Around" is an important concept because archeologists cannot give exact dates, but can accurately estimate a span of years. A scroll estimated to have been copied around 250 BC, could have been originally authored as far back as circa 350 BC—the days of the prophets. Texts of Daniel from around 100-200 BC put the writing in Daniel's own lifetime.

Archeologists at Qumran discovered apocrypha ("hidden" texts) and pseudepigrapha among the Dead Sea scrolls. According to Carroll, apocryphal writings "are inspirational but not inspired." They can shed light on events surrounding the Biblical era, tell about Judaism and God's care for His people, but can be full of errors as well. The apocrypha were copied without the meticulous care that had been lavished on the other

texts that comprise the Biblical canon. They were not part of the original Hebrew Scriptures. Some apocrypha were proclaimed to be deuterocanonical (“a second canon”) by the Catholic Church during the Council of Trent (1546-1560). Interestingly, the Eastern churches accept many more apocryphal writings than the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestant Biblical translators included these as separate writings (as in the 1611 King James Bible) but gradually eliminated them from Protestant Bibles.

Pseudepigrapha were those writings falsely attributed to famous people. This was not an attempt at plagiarism but rather a common genre in ancient times. The Book of Enoch is an example of pseudepigrapha. Professor Carroll stressed that Christians should not argue over the presence or absence of these books in today’s Bibles. “In essentials, agreement; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love,” he quoted.

The Book of Isaiah, found among the Dead Sea scrolls, was carefully compared to today’s translations and revealed only 100 noteworthy variations, such as changes in word order or spelling. Overall, the comparison showed 98% accuracy, with the 2% differentiation not changing the meaning of the text. Many ask how this book we call the

Bible could possibly have been copied without error. Using a quill pen by candlelight to copy scripture onto a scroll was laborious but Carroll maintained that is how God safeguarded His Word.

“Moses didn’t write the account of his own death. There are places (in scrolls) where editing takes place. We understand that...The process through which God chose to reveal Himself to us protected the revelation, because it made it nearly impossible ...for me to come along a week later and say, ‘you forgot this paragraph, put that word in there; put that in over there.’ And while we have evidence of corrections in the scrolls, that’s natural. Massive editing of that nature didn’t happen. That’s not how they wrote text. That’s not how they composed text.”

He denied the commonly held belief that if a small error were discovered, the scroll would be destroyed. We in the audience passed along, with sacramental reverence, examples of ancient scrolls. We saw corrected sections, and Dr. Carroll pointed out these

areas to demonstrate that the scribes had a great devotion to accuracy. They were determined to get it absolutely correct. Additionally, these documents included marks, “colophons,” to identify the scribe. One scribe wrote, “Oh Reader, take note. While the hand that writes this lies in the grave, the word copied lives forever.”

“There is no book on earth that has as secure a record as the Bible,” Dr. Carroll declared.

Scrolls date to antiquity but Christian scribes adapted readily to the newer “kodex,” or book. All known manuscripts from the New Testament, except one, have survived in book form.

Carroll cited even more amazing manuscript discoveries. The earliest Hebrew texts were discovered in two small scrolls inserted in a

necklace amulet that dates to the Assyrian attempt to conquer Jerusalem in 650 BC.

Written texts discovered on clay tablets date to around 3500 BC. The type of clay, language and direction of the script identified some of these tablets to be from Ur and can be placed at the time of Abraham and Sarah. These Genesis era tablets shed light on the life and culture of that time and help explain the actions of the people in the Bible. Five hundred thousand such tablets are catalogued but not yet translated.

The earliest Book of Psalms was discovered buried under the head of a young girl in Egypt and date from 330 to 350 AD. Carroll said this raises the question about the gold book said to have been discovered by Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, because it is said to date back to 500 BC. The book form did not exist that far back.

The Leningrad Kodex in St. Petersburg, Russia, is the earliest complete Jewish Bible known to exist. It was written around 1000 AD, long after the New Testament. Since the Old Testament would have been completed around 335 BC, why is there such a gap between the dates? Scott explained that from the Jewish perspective, something old that is newly copied would be preferred to something old which could be damaged. Hence, the newer copy would have been preserved.

In 1896, one of the greatest treasure troves of Jewish writings was discovered in a Cairo Genizah. (A “genizah” holds sacred Hebrew books and can be buried or hidden anywhere in a synagogue.) Of the 300,000 documents found there, small collections were sent to libraries throughout the world. Some of the portion sent to Cambridge is published now, over 100 years later.

As he passed around the Ester Scroll, Carroll explained that this would have been the only scroll that could have been kept in a (Jewish) home because it does not contain the name of God. This particular scroll, found in Germany, was over 1000 years old and could have been read by a family in Luther’s time as well as Adolph Hitler’s.



(Ester Scroll from Germany)

It seemed amazing that people sitting in a church in the 21st century could hold the 1,000 year old Ester Scroll in their hands.

How difficult is it to move ancient artifacts from one country to another? Professor Carroll explained, “Each country has its own set of antiquities laws and ...they have two sets of laws in place. One has to do with stuff that belongs to us (the country in which the

artifact is found) and stuff that found its way into (that country)...There are standards in place...for things that are found under water and things found on land.”

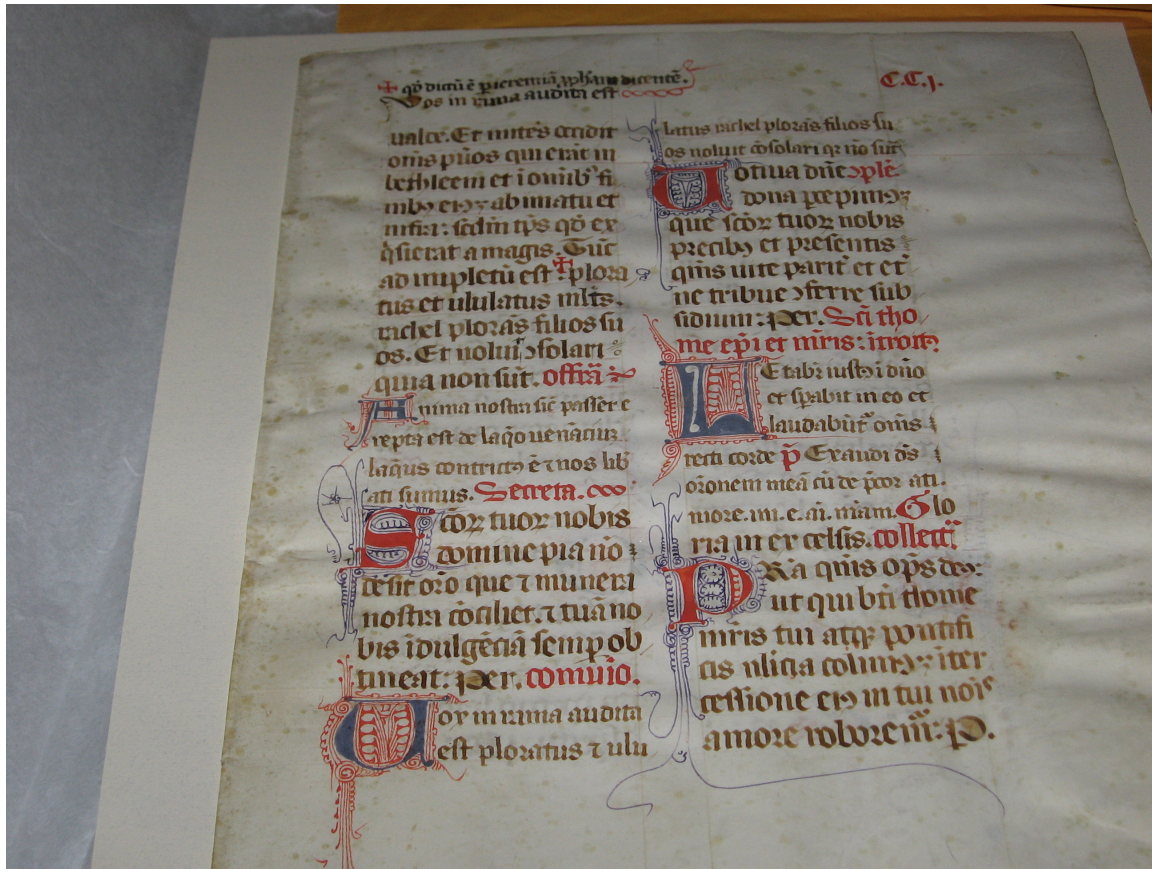
To put the value of these ancient scriptures in perspective, Carroll noted that a 16th century lawyer paid a year’s wage for a copy of the Gospel of St. John. Another person paid a month’s wage for all the scripture that could be copied in one day. Others, like Tyndale, paid with their lives.

In closing, Carroll declared we are nothing without God’s provision and grace. He asked for prayers to carry out his mission. He feels he’s in the front lines in a battle against Satan who wants to erode God’s truth. “Faith without reason is foolishness. Reason and faith can exist together,” he declared.

### More photos







(From Book of Hours)



(Fragment of ancient Scriptural text)



(Silver pieces on scrolls)



(Books from the Gutenberg era)



(Dr. Carroll holding a Medieval study Bible)

