The Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls

In the spring of 1947 Bedouin goat-herds, searching the cliffs along the Dead Sea for a lost goat (or for treasure, depending on who is telling the story), came upon a cave containing jars filled with manuscripts. That find caused a sensation when it was released to the world, and it continues to fascinate the scholarly community and the public to this day.

The first discoveries came to the attention of scholars in 1948, when seven of the scrolls were sold by the Bedouin to a cobbler and antiquities dealer called Kando. He in turn sold three of the scrolls to Eleazar L. Sukenik of Hebrew University, and four to Metropolitan Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel of the Syrian Orthodox monastery of St. Mark. Mar Athanasius in turn brought his four to the American School of Oriental Research, where they came to the attention of American and European scholars.

It was not until 1949 that the site of the find was identified as the cave now known as Qumran Cave 1. It was that identification that led to further explorations and excavations of the area of Khirbet

The Qumran site and the Dead Sea.
Qumran. Further search of Cave 1 revealed archaeological finds of pottery, cloth and wood, as well as a number of additional manuscript fragments. It was these discoveries that proved decisively that the scrolls were indeed ancient and authentic.

Between 1949 and 1956, in what became a race between the Bedouin and the archaeologists, ten additional caves were found in the hills around Qumran Cave 4. These caves yielded several more scrolls, as well as thousands of fragments of scrolls: the remnants of approximately 800 manuscripts dating from approximately 200 B.C.E. to 68 C.E.

The manuscripts of the Qumran caves include early copies of biblical books in Hebrew and Aramaic, hymns, prayers, Jewish writings known as pseudepigrapha (because they are attributed to ancient biblical characters such as Enoch or the patriarchs), and texts that seem to represent the beliefs of a particular Jewish group that may have lived at the site of Qumran. Most scholars believe that the Qumran community was very similar to the Essenes, one of four Jewish "philosophies" described by Josephus, a first century C.E. Jewish historian. Some have pointed to similarities with other Jewish groups mentioned by Josephus: the Sadducees, Pharisees, and Zealots.

We do not know precisely who wrote those sectarian scrolls, but we can say that the authors seemed to be connected to the priesthood, were led by priests, disapproved of the Jerusalem priesthood, encouraged a strict and pious way of life, and expected an imminent confrontation between the forces of good and evil.

http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/wsrp/educational_site/dead_sea_scrolls/
The Bible

Introduction:

The Bible claims to be inspired of God (II Pet. 1:20-21), infallible (II Tim. 3:16-17), and complete (James 1:21-25; Jude 3). God spoke His divine revelation to man and it was then recorded (Gal. 1:11-12; Eph. 3:1ff; etc.). While internal evidences abound to prove the validity of the Bible there are also external evidences that further solidify our faith in God’s divine revelation to man. This lesson shall examine evidences for the validity of the Bible through Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and codices.

I. Terms:

A. Manuscripts are hand written copies or portions of the text of the Bible.
B. Codex (codices) is a Latin word meaning block of wood or book.
C. Cannon = straight, incapable of bending, standard, rule, or concrete thing (came to be used to denote the complete and authoritative scriptures).
D. Apocrypha = writings or statements of dubious authenticity.
E. Printing Press – Invented 1439 by Johann Guternberg

II. Hebrew Manuscripts (Rom. 15:4):

A. Hebrew manuscript discoveries do not date back as far as NT Greek manuscripts.
B. Two Primary Hebrew Manuscripts:
   1. Aleppo Codex dated ce. 920 (AD)
   2. Leningrad Codex dated ce. 1008 (AD)
C. Dead Sea Scrolls (ce. 1948)

III. Greek Manuscripts (Gal. 6:11):

A. No other ancient text is more preserved than the New Testament Bible (5,400 complete or fragmented Greek / 10,000 Latin / and 9,300 manuscripts in various other ancient languages including Syriac, Slavic, Gothic, Ethiopic, Coptic, and Armenian (see chart).
B. Two styles of writings among scribes: Uncials and Minuscules or cursives.
C. There are two primary manuscripts of importance:
   1. Codex Sinaiticus (Codex Alpha) dated 350 AD
   2. Codex Vaticanus (Codex B) Vatican Manuscript dated 350 AD
D. Other NT manuscripts of importance are the Codex Bezae (400 AD / four gospels and Acts), Codex Alexandrinus (400 AD / all LXX {Greek Septuagint, Entire NT, and some apocryphal books), Textus Receptus (the “received text” 1516), Vetus Latina (Old Latin Bible / 382-405 AD), and the Vulgate (Jerome’s revision of the Vetus Latina 5th century AD).

IV. The Canon of the Bible (Gal. 1:6ff):

A. The Roman Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity as the official Roman religion and closed the cannon of scriptures 317 AD.
B. 367 AD Athanasius used this term to differentiate the inspired word of God from the books of apocrypha.
C. The Synod of Hippo 393 AD... first gathering of bishops who sealed the NT cannon adding to the Catholic Bible the books of Apocrypha.

Conclusion:

God’s providence certainly played a part in the coming together of what we call our Bible. God “moved men to speak” (II Pet. 1:20ff) and so they delivered His law that we have today. When the apostles spoke they revealed God’s commands to man (I Cor. 14:37). Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35).