

Class 1b

SEEKING JESUS

Outline

- Some preliminary definitions
- The Story of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark
- Discovering Jesus
 - Issues with our sources
 - Issues with the gospels
 - What the Bible is
 - Problems with our own biases (Levine)
- Who was Jesus?

SOME PRELIMINARY DEFINITIONS

Some Preliminary Definitions

- Gospel - literally, "good news," this old English word translates the Greek word for good news, ευαγγελιον
- These are accounts of Jesus' life and/or teaching, though not always ALL of his life
- There are over 39 known gospels
- The ones we'll be reading were composed in Greek, though Jesus himself spoke Aramaic

THE STORY OF JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

The Story of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark

- Your impressions of and questions about the story
- Key points in/of the story
 - Where does it begin?
 - How would you describe the pace?
 - What types of things does Jesus regularly do?
 - Pivot scenes: 8:27-9:1; 9:2-13
 - The turn toward Jerusalem
 - Controversies build
 - Passion narrative: last supper, arrest, trial, execution
 - Resurrection story (ends at 16:8)

DISCOVERING JESUS

Issues with the Gospels

- There aren't very many witnesses to work with (little data)
- The witnesses don't agree (contradictions)
- The witnesses agree too much (they're not independent)
- The witnesses were not direct eyewitnesses (2nd-hand testimony)
- The witnesses are 35-75 years later; events *after* his life shape presentations *of* his life (anachronism)
- The writers were biased
 - Messianic belief clashes with execution, lack of a messianic age
 - Political execution clashes with efforts to evangelize
- We are biased too

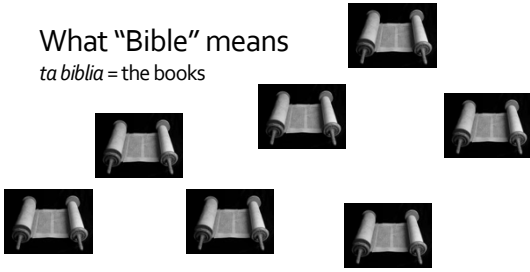
} allusions & prophecies are sought in Jewish scripture to explain these problems
but these are explanations, not evidence; they are less historically reliable

Issues with the Bible What the Bible IS

- What "Bible" means
- How scholars reconstruct it
- What gets lost (and added) in transmission

What "Bible" means

ta biblia = the books

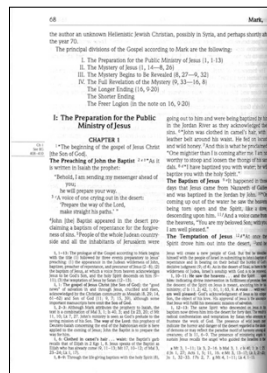


How scholars reconstruct it...





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Manuscript Discoveries of the 20th Century



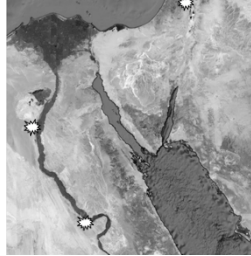
The Dead Sea Scrolls
1947–1955
900+ fragmentary mss of the Jewish Bible,
apocrypha and sectarian texts



Oxyrhynchus
1895–1930
50,000+ fragmentary Greek mss,
some of them Christian



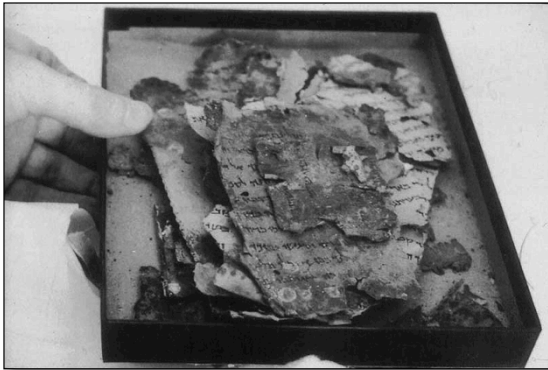
Nag Hammadi
1945
13 books with 52 separate "tractates" —
4th century copies of earlier gnostic works







The Isaiah Scroll from Cave 1 (1QIsa^a)



Dead Sea Scrolls Fragments bought from the Bedouin



The Psalms Scroll from Cave 11 (11QP5^a)



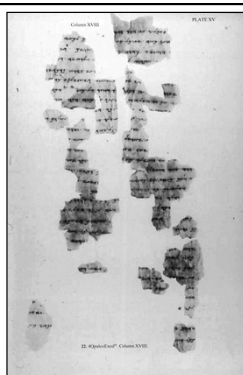
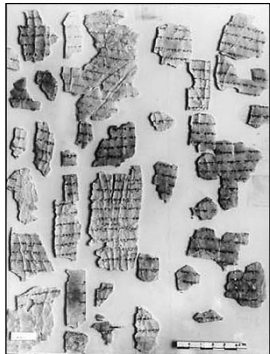
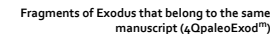
Part of the "Thanksgiving Scroll"
from Cave 11 (11QH^a)



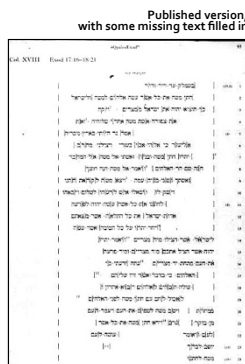
Part of the same scroll,
under normal (left) and
infrared (right) light



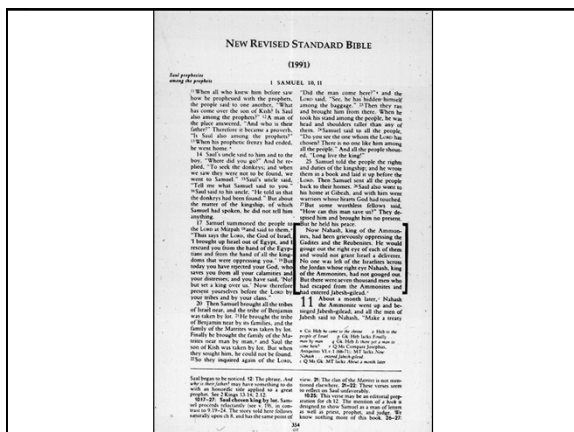
Scholars separating the scrolls manuscripts in Jerusalem



A reconstructed column of the Exodus manuscript

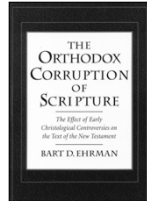


Published version,
with some missing text filled in



What gets lost (and added) in transmission

- Grammar is corrected
- Gaps are filled
- Ideas are corrected
- New traditions are added
- Words are adjusted to prevent problematic interpretations
- Words are harmonized to other scriptural accounts
- New mistakes are introduced (words are missed or misspelled)



Problems with our own biases

Levine

- Why should Jesus' Jewishness be significant in any historical portrait?
- Why isn't it?

These are typical Jewish concerns and behaviors, yet they are read as examples of Jesus OPPOSING rather than conforming to Judaism.

WHO WAS JESUS?

Reflection

- What aspects of the tradition about Jesus that *you* are familiar with do you consider historical, and why?
- What aspects do you consider unhistorical, and why?
- If you believe in Jesus Christ, what do you believe about him?

