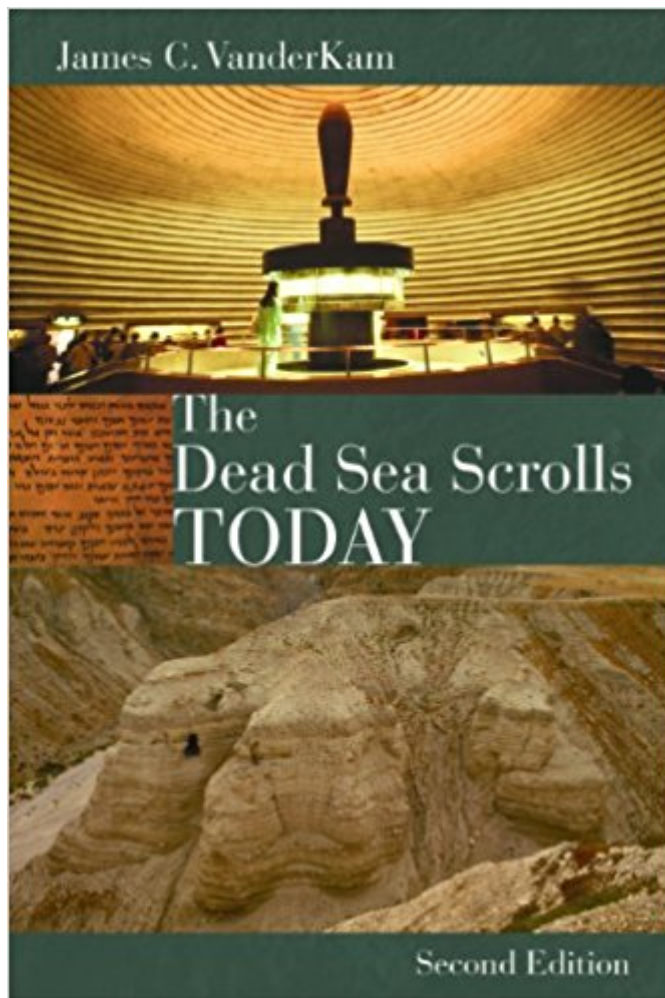


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# The Dead Sea Scrolls Today, Rev. Ed



## Synopsis

Best-selling book on the Scrolls, updated to reflect current scholarship and recent debates The premier Dead Sea Scrolls primer ever since its original publication in 1994, James VanderKam's *Dead Sea Scrolls Today* won the Biblical Archaeology Society's Publication Award in 1995 for the Best Popular Book on Biblical Archaeology. In this expanded and updated edition the book will continue to illuminate the greatest archaeological find in modern times. While retaining the format, style, and aims of the first edition, the second edition of *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* takes into account the full publication of the texts from the caves and the post-1994 debates about the Qumran site, and it contains an additional section regarding information that the Scrolls provide about Second Temple Judaism and the groups prominent at the time. Further, VanderKam has enlarged the bibliographies throughout and changed the phrasing in many places. Finally, quotations of the Scrolls are from the fifth edition of Geza Vermes's translation, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Penguin, 1997).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Choice Magazine, *Outstanding Academic Title* (2010) From reviews of the first edition  
Commonweal "This is the book for those interested in a sober, careful, and well-written account of the discovery of the Scrolls, their meaning, and the current state of research on them. A well-organized and highly readable account."  
Hebrew Studies "An attractive book, easy to read, and with excellent photographs. VanderKam has rendered a much-needed service to the Dead Sea

Scrolls by presenting such a thoughtful, well-reasoned, and balanced treatment."Church & Synagogue Libraries "This is the book congregational libraries need to help readers put in perspective much that has come about as a result of the discovery of the Scrolls a half century ago."Journal of Biblical Literature "Among the many books on the Dead Sea Scrolls, this one can be recommended as the best popular recitation of the history of the sites, of the texts, and of the scholarly process."

James C. VanderKam is John A. O'Brien Professor of Hebrew Scriptures at the University of Notre Dame and a member of the international team responsible for preserving and translating the Dead Sea Scrolls. His previous books include *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* and *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (both Eerdmans).

This is a very well written discussion of the Dead Sea Scrolls pitched at a popular level. You learn about the 1947 discoveries in cave 1 (The Isaiah scrolls, the Manual of Discipline, and the Nahum commentaries. You also learn about the later discoveries in cave 4 especially, which was the mother lode, with over 900 scrolls and artifacts. Treasure buffs will marvel at the discovery of the Copper Scroll, which tells of buried treasure near Qumran, but to this day, no one has found the treasure, which some surmise has already been raided and recovered. Work continues on the scrolls to this day. Fantastic links with the Jewish and early Christian communities have been made. Both the Qumran Essenes and the early Christians revered the books of Isaiah, Psalms, and Deuteronomy, for these are three most quoted books in both the New Testament and in the Scrolls. It is unclear as to whether or not the Qumran community ever allowed marriage and if they believed in one or two messiahs. We also glean some possible tensions between the Qumran Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest of the Maccabean era, which may have prompted the Teacher to move his community to the Qumran wilderness. This is a great read and a very helpful primer to the Dead Sea Scrolls. You should read it before you go to see them at a Museum near you.

Fantastic book and well written. Dr. VanderKam does a fantastic job of taking a complicated subject and making it accessible to a wide audience. I really appreciate how he not only presents the consensus of scholarship on a given question but presents why the evidence supports or does not support a given hypothesis.

One of the greatest – if not the greatest – archaeological discoveries of the twentieth century was the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls opened new windows onto the world of Second Temple Judaism, especially the theology and practices of the Essene community. Unfortunately, they also spawned an entire industry of conspiracy thinking and pseudo-scholarship that distorts popular understanding of the scrolls even to the present day. The great merit of James C. VanderKam's *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* is that it lays out an intellectually responsible view of the scrolls in lucid prose for an informed, popular audience. Successive chapters describe the finding of the scrolls, the variety of manuscripts discovered, why the Qumran community was Essene, the theology and practice of the Qumran community, and the relationship of the scrolls to the Old Testament and the New Testament. A final chapter outlines the major controversies about the publication of the scrolls, providing a non-conspiratorial explanation for the delay in publication of some of them. Throughout, VanderKam's presentation of the material is fair-minded and its organization logical and easy to follow. If you know nothing about the Dead Sea Scrolls, I highly recommend starting with this book. It is an indispensable introduction to a topic that has great significance, not only for Jews and Christians, but also for anyone fascinated by the history of the ancient world.

After finishing this book I was surprised at how well the author presented the most recent scholarship in a format that didn't feel jargon loaded. This book recounts the discovery of the DSS, the content of the DSS, the theories regarding the meaning of the DSS, and the controversies of the DSS. The author leaves the reader with plenty of further reading material. I've read many other works on the DSS, most of them were on the boring side. This book is academic, yet readable. Of all of the books dealing with the DSS I've read, this is the one I would recommend to anyone wanting a thorough, yet engaging introduction to the scrolls. The author is a well respected scholar in the field of DSS studies. This book is more than worthy.

Incredibly easy to read and follow. VanderKam does a great job at summarizing the scholarship on the Dead Sea Scrolls and explaining their relationship to sectarian Judaism and the New Testament. Overall it's a great work that will be very helpful to those looking to get up to speed on the fundamentals. I will say however, if you are not really interested in archaeology, I recommend skipping pages 20-43. By far the most dry and dull section. It goes over methodology and dating. I've read a few other chapters and articles on dating the scrolls and they are all incredibly boring. VanderKam does a vastly better job covering it than most, but it's still pretty dry. So again, if you're

not super into archaeological dating, jump from page 20 to the page 47 'Survey of the Manuscripts.' That being said, I really enjoyed the book. It's required reading for a class I'm taking this semester and I basically read the whole thing in the first weekend.

I purchased this after going to see the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. If you are looking for a book that explains what was found, who left the scrolls there, and what it all means, this is the book to get. James C. Vanderkam does an excellent job presenting the facts and then explaining the theories. A fascinating book for those interested in the lessons of archeology, history and religion.

Very easy to understand and packed with good information

The Dead Sea Scrolls have sparked a good deal of interest for those curious about the mysteries of the Bible. "The Dead Sea Scrolls Today" is the second edition update to the study of the Dead Seas Scrolls, manuscripts which provide a decidedly different and insightful view of the Bible. The original volume won awards when it was published sixteen years ago, and with new research and updates, author James C. VanderKam makes the update just as valuable reading even if one has read the original. "The Dead Sea Scrolls Today" is a valuable addition to any biblical archeology and history collection.

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