

A Study Guide – The Dead Sea Scrolls

Context

The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the Wadi Qumran, completely by accident, during 1946-1956. They are manuscripts of things that would later be Hebrew Bible canon and some things that definitely would not. Hebrew Scriptures, Second Temple stuff (Wisdom of Sirach, Enoch, Jubilees, Tobit, etc.) and sectarian things, which is what we looked at. The sect in question was very convinced that they were the ones doing everything the Right Way.

We looked at excerpts from the *Community Rule*, the *War Scroll*, and the *Thanksgiving Hymns*.

Body/Soul Dualism

I am a creature of clay (Thanksgiving Hymns), but other than that, body/soul dualism goes largely unaddressed, as does resurrection of the body.

Heaven and Hell

There is a community with the Sons of Heaven mentioned in the Thanksgiving Hymns. There's Abbadon/Sheol, a bottomless pit for bad people, in the Community Rule.

Intercession

No intercession in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Personal/Collective

The Dead Sea Scrolls operate under a collective eschatology, as did the sect who composed them. This is especially visible in the Community Rule. Everyone within the sect is a child of light, allied with the angels of light; those outside the sect, Jews and Gentiles alike, are children of darkness aligned with the angels of darkness.

What happens to Earth?

The earth is set on fire in the war between the forces of light and darkness (led by Belial), but it will not end until the Appointed Time.

Purgatory

After the final judgment God will purify everyone with his spirit of truth, holiness and purification. This is described as an action, rather than a place.

First & Second Death

There is a Renewal (Community Scroll) after the Final Judgment. Dark walkers receive "shameful extinction" in the aforementioned Pit.

Influences

According to Himmelfarb, the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls are influenced by the Hebrew Bible, performing a very specific kind of exegesis on it.