

**The Dead Sea Scrolls**  
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WHILE in Jerusalem I had the privilege of spending some time with the director of the Jerusalem Museum examining the Hebrew Bible scrolls that were discovered in caves near the Dead Sea. As I saw some of the archaeological discoveries that either establish the reliability of the Bible text or furnish an historical background that is a great aid to a correct understanding of the events described in the Bible, I was impressed with the thought that unbelief or ignorance of its teachings is inexcusable.

I saw the jars that had held the original manuscripts and the linen which had been wrapped around these precious documents. I handled and examined fragments of the Bible manuscripts of Genesis, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah. These are carefully placed between two sheets of glass where they are fitted together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Some of these manuscripts date back to the fourth century BC. I especially remember handling an old manuscript in the Pheenician script that had been written some 400 years before Christ.

AS the director of the Jerusalem Museum assured us that they had found manuscripts or fragments of all the books of the Old Testament, I asked him if there was any difference between these ancient manuscripts and our present Bible. He quickly answered, "There is virtually no difference. In practically all things they are exactly the same as the Authorized Version. You can take that for certain," he assured me personally.

These manuscripts are coming from the Wilderness of Judea, and it is certain there are more to discover, as the district is full of caves. The discovery of these Biblical manuscripts has certainly turned the arid Dead Sea region into an archeologist's paradise. An official report of the scientific excavations of the first cave was published recently. In this work 971 manuscript fragments are published, of which 964 are photographic reproductions. These fragments come from eleven Old Testament books and several non-Biblical Jewish writings. Though they do not provide much text material in point of quantity, they certainly give a good picture of the nature of the Bible text as it existed in the time when these manuscripts were written, in the last centuries before Christ and the first century of the Christian era.

It is interesting to note that in February, 1955, an official announcement was made by the Government of the State of Israel that four scrolls that had been the property of St. Mark's Monastery in Jerusalem and which had been stored in America since 1948, had been purchased by Israel. The price paid for the scrolls was £120,000. This shows clearly how valuable these documents are.

Since the discovery of the first cave in 1947, the manuscript material found in the Dead Sea region has increased greatly. Several more caves have been discovered, and many manuscript fragments have come to light. Cave Number Four has proved to be the most important so far discovered, for it has provided thousands of manuscripts belonging to more than a hundred Biblical and non-Biblical works, among which all the Old Testament books are represented. All this material is in the Archeological Museum in Jerusalem, where French, English, Polish, German, and American scholars are working hard deciphering, assembling, and preparing the fragments for publication.

Already it is possible to draw a number of conclusions from these discoveries. First and foremost I would say the most valuable finding is that the Old Testament text has experienced virtually no alteration during the past 2,000 years. The text of the Dead Sea scrolls is for all practical purposes identical with the Hebrew Bible on which all modern translations are based.

Here is an interesting statement made by Professor Frank M. Cross, who is a member of the permanent staff working on the Dead Sea scrolls. He says, "Not only in Isaiah, but in other prophetic books, indeed in the entire Old Testament, we must now assume that the Old Testament text was stabilized early, and that late recessional activities were only of slight effect. This conclusion, of course, powerfully supports textual scholars of conservative persuasion."-The Christian Century, August 11, 1955, page 920.

This pronouncement, coming from one who has such an intimate knowledge of this mass of unpublished material, can be added to the statements concerning the reliability of the Bible text, which had been made by several scholars shortly after the discovery and publication of the Isaiah scroll.

It can safely be said that the finding of the Dead Sea scrolls has been one of the most important discoveries ever made in the field of Bible archeology. They therefore have great importance in strengthening the confidence of Bible readers in the integrity of the Old Testament.

These discoveries will also prove of value in other directions. For instance, many of the non-Biblical works shed very interesting light on the thinking of the Jews in the time of Christ and the apostles. The result is that many of the scholars expect that the Dead Sea scrolls will exert an even more definite influence on the New Testament studies than on the Old Testament. Whether this will be the case or not it is a little early to say.

During the past few years excavations have uncovered the location of the community which produced these priceless documents. Lying only a few miles south of Jericho, the ruins of this site have been known for many years, but have never been touched by the spade of the archeologist. The excavations have now revealed that this site contains the ruins of the headquarters of the Essenes, a Jewish group living in the Dead Sea region. Although this sect is never mentioned in the Bible it played a great role in the religious thinking of the Jews at the time when Christianity was born.

I was very interested in some of the things discovered in these excavations. I have seen the old stone tables on which they wrote their manuscripts. I have also seen and handled the old bronze and baked clay inkpots that they used to hold their ink while written, these manuscripts, and one also sees the howls that they probably used to wash their hands before they would write the word God, for so particular were the old Jewish scribes that they would never dare to write the word God without first washing their hands.

In a recent presidential address to the Victoria Institute, London, Sir Frederick G. Kenyon, who was at one time head of the manuscript department at the British Museum, gave a very heartening review of the manner in which, during the past half century or so, the critics and opponents of the Bible had been decisively defeated, while the authenticity and trustworthiness of the Scriptures have been triumphantly established. I quote his words: "In the latter years of the nineteenth century the champions of Christianity were mainly on the defensive. Natural science was in the heyday of the progress which took its rise in the discoveries and doctrine of Darwin. At the same time within the sphere of religious study itself a school of thought asserted itself which questioned the authenticity and trustworthiness of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and applied the utmost freedom of skepticism to their narratives. Against this attitude the state of our knowledge of Biblical archeology did not supply arguments 'which could effectively convince those who did not wish to be convinced. The advocates of the Christian faith fought at a disadvantage and were on the defensive. Now all this is changed, and the point which I want to make is that we are no longer on the defensive. It is no longer the Christian scholar who is out of date. The up-to-date scholars are now those who recognize the authenticity and authority of the Christian literature. It is the critics who formerly claimed to be advanced, who are now belated and behind the times."

We may rejoice in the great evidence that our God has given us in these last days, of the truthfulness of the Bible. We would do well to remember that if God thought it worthwhile to give us the Book, it is worth our while to seek to fathom its depths and to saturate our thinking with its truths. So, read the Bible to be wise, believe it to find satisfaction, and practice it to enjoy fullness of life.

### **The Communities who Hid the Scrolls**

There were at least three main areas where Scrolls were hidden-at Qumran, Murabbaat, and Masada, all in the general area of the Dead Sea. There were other sites and later occupations also, but these three have been especially significant for Bible times and backgrounds.

Each of these groups was utterly dissatisfied with conditions under their Roman overlords, and sought refuge out in the wilderness where they came together as a community. In a number of ways their pattern of life fits the picture already known of the Essenes, Jewish groups who banded together in a monastic life in the wilderness.

The community at Qumran occupied their buildings from about 130 BC down to 68 AD, when the Romans sought them out and destroyed their settlement. The community had been to a great extent self supporting, even having their own farm at Ain Feshka, a fresh-water oasis just around the next headland from Qumran.

We can date the final destruction of those living at Murabbaat to the time of the 2nd Jewish Revolt which started in 132 AD. One significant find was a letter from Simon Bar Kochbah, the leader of the revolt to the local commander.

The third group at Masada-third in that the findings were later than those from Qumran and Murabbaat-met its end in AD 72. After the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, many Jews sought refuge in Herod the Great deserted palace at Masada, 1500 feet above the Dead Sea. The story of their destruction is known in literary sources, including the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus. After a heroic resistance, over 900 Jews chose suicide rather than surrender to the hated Romans.

### **Why Did They Hide the Scrolls?**

The communities knew that they faced almost certain defeat and so did their utmost to ensure that their sacred Scriptures and other writings did not fall into "heathen" hands. To the Jew, the Scriptures were so sacred that when an "official" copy reached the stage that it was beginning to wear, it was buried with proper ceremony-a funeral service. So, when these Dead Sea communities seemed likely to be destroyed (as in fact they were), they saw to it that their precious writings were hidden as best they could be from the Romans.

Almost inaccessible caves were chosen, the scrolls were carefully rolled and put in earthen jars, and then they were hidden in the caves. They remained there throughout the centuries, many of them not being found for nearly 2,000 years. The time of their modern recovery coincided closely with Israel's "official" rebirth as a nation.

### **What Were the Contents of the Scrolls?**

Clearly one of the main functions of some members of the community-especially at Qumran-was the copying of Scrolls as they were dictated by another priest. One cave alone (Number 4) contained over 10,000 fragments, representing about 380 manuscripts. They were not all Scriptures, for this was a general library of their national literature. There was a great amount of literary activity in the period between the Old and New Testaments, and copies of some of those productions are included in these Dead Sea Scrolls.

We have said that parts of every Book of the Old Testament except Esther have been found. No doubt Esther's non-appearance is simply fortuitous, for even though there was debate as to its acceptance into the Canon of Scripture, there were many

non-canonical books copied. Parts of it may yet turn up, or it may be that it has been burned in earlier centuries-as mentioned earlier. (Esther was accepted by the Jews as canonical at the "Council of Jamnia" in AD 90.)

We saw that one of the most important Scrolls (found in Cave No. 1) was a complete copy of Isaiah's prophecy. Fragments of more than a dozen other copies of Isaiah have since been identified, but this first one was the best of them all. It was over 24 feet in length, and until recently was the longest of all the Scrolls recovered. (The "Temple Scroll" is about four feet longer.)

It is now generally accepted that this Isaiah Scroll dates to about 150 BC, well before the time of Christ on earth. This is especially significant because Isaiah has so many prophecies which ultimately looked on to the Person of Jesus Christ. Here then is a conclusive evidence that these prophecies were indeed Written and copied-long before their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. (Compare e.g. Isaiah 61:1, 2 with Luke 4:17-21.)

Proponents of the "multiple author" theory of Isaiah argue that Isaiah 40 is the commencement of the second great section of this Prophecy, the basis of this being that Isaiah 40 is set against the Exile. Many conservative scholars believe that this is predictive writing, and that Isaiah is writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God. Thus He was able to prophesy as to the coming events of his people's history. Some point to Isaiah 8:16, where we read, "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples," to suggest that the disciples of Isaiah remembered his prophecy and in the distress of the Exile opened up this message from God. It would be very fitting, then, to find that the heavens were not as brass after all, for that second portion commences. "Comfort you, comfort you, my people." (Isaiah 40:1).

The fact of no break between chapters 39 and 40 of the Dead Sea Scroll Isaiah is not conclusive as to single authorship, but it certainly did not bolster the argument as to dual authorship.

Another interesting Scroll was a commentary on the first two chapters of Habakkuk. It related contemporary events to the Prophecy, claiming that these local happenings were the fulfillment of the Prophecy itself, and this becomes an important dating point. These people regarded their commentary as inspired: their belief was that the original prophet (Habakkuk) did not understand his own prophecy, and now that its time of fulfillment had come a new revelatory explanation was needed-hence the "inspired" commentary. One other interesting point is that this commentary showed that they regarded the Old Testament Scriptures as being relevant to their own situation.

### What Were Some of the Non-Biblical Scrolls?

The "Manual of Discipline" gave considerable insight into the rules of the Qumran community. There were ritual washings, a communal sharing, and intense concern for the preservation and application of the Word of God.

"The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness" dated to the first Century AD. It described the last Great War as the forces of evil opposed the good powers, the members of the community being among these latter.

Other Scrolls included a Genesis Apocryphon which gave an expanded paraphrase in Aramaic of Genesis chapters 5 to 15. In this patriarchs tell their own story, and add interesting descriptive material, one especially vivid passage being that in which Sarah's beauty is described.

Another Scroll was a collection of Thanksgiving Psalms, written in Hebrew and dated to the first Century AD. Their pattern was similar to the Biblical Psalms, but they were an independent collection.

Yet another was the Copper Scroll, which, when eventually unrolled, proved to be a treasure map. Various opinions are held as to its original purpose: some have doubted that it was ever meant to be taken seriously, especially as many of the clues were rather general, but it would be strange to go to the trouble of inscribing meaningless details on a roll of copper! It is reasonable to assume that this community which shared so much would have considerable material wealth, for many who joined them would have brought with them much of value. What happened to that wealth? Hence the possible significance of the "treasure map," and the clues written into the copper scroll.

We referred in passing to the "Temple Scroll," about 28 feet in length. Actually it dealt with four main groups of subjects:

- (1) An enumeration of Israel's feasts, including two feasts previously unknown-the Feast of Wine and the Feast of Oil.
- (2) A collection of ritual rites relating to uncleanness and purification.
- (3) Minute descriptions of the Temple-and they do not agree at every point with all the details known from other sources.
- (4) Royal statutes, especially relating to the mobilization of military forces and preparation for war.

One surprising aspect of the Scroll is that it is written as a Torah (law) given by God to Moses, and the whole text is in the first person, with God named as the Speaker. This is quite different from other Dead Sea Scrolls where the documents are copies of Biblical Books, commentaries on Biblical Books, or the sectarian documents of the Qumran community itself. Apparently this Temple Scroll was meant to be a Biblical text although it never found its way into the Canon. Professor Yigael Yadin, who released it to the world, believed that the author of the Scroll was under the impression that he was editing a new Book of Scripture.

This adds new material to that found in the Law of Moses, including the death penalty against espionage. There is no such law in the traditional text of the Old Testament. This new ordinance was apparently to cover a problem at the time this Scroll was composed. It is interesting to notice that Professor Yadin says that under the statutes of the king, the mobilization of troops is remarkably similar to that used for enlisting the people in the two weeks before the six day war which commenced on June 5, 1967. Professor Yadin says: "The parallel between the Scroll's prescriptions for enlisting the people in time of danger and what actually happened here in Israel two weeks before June 5 is really fantastic."

Professor Yadin commented that in the Pentateuch there is no law from God as to the building of the Temple, and he said: "I am sure that this Scroll of ours is one attempt to supply that missing Torah of God regarding the building of the Temple." When asked as to the possibility of some Jewish group using this plan to build a new Temple on the site of the second Temple on which a Moslem mosque now stands, he humorously discounted the possibility by pointing out that the damaged condition of the Scroll meant that some of the building's details are lost beyond recovery. [News Letter Number 7, 1967-1968, of the American Schools of Oriental Research.]

To discuss all the Dead Sea Scrolls in a brief survey would be impossible-for they are far too numerous. The fact is that 1947 was the starting point of exciting new discoveries for Old Testament Scholarship whereby Old Testament writings, commentaries, and Aramaic targums (paraphrases and expansions) have all come to light, throwing their focus on the Old Testament Scriptures and on the very times in which our Lord was teaching in Palestine.

We have seen that the findings were not limited to Old Testament Manuscripts, for this was a time of great literary activity and many fragments of non canonical books were found. Professor Yigael Yadin has reported that part of the original of the non-canonical book Ecclesiasticus has turned up among the fragments recovered at Masada. We shall see also that the Dead Sea Scrolls were important for New Testament scholarship.

### The Search for the Messiah

The "Manual of Discipline" and the "War Scroll" made it clear that the teachings of this community were very far removed from those of the Lord Jesus Christ. Where the Dead Sea community were taught to hate their enemies and ruthlessly to destroy them, Jesus said, "Love your enemies." Possibly Jesus had the Qumran teaching in mind when He gave the teaching re hate and love at Matthew 5:43-48. He even chose a Jew who served the Romans (Matthew) and a Zealot who violently opposed them (Simon Zelotes), and made them brothers in His intimate band of disciples. His "brotherhood" was far wider than that of Qumran.

There was a rigid legality about the Qumran group that was absent from the teachings of Christ. Their "Teacher of Righteousness" and his band of 12 chosen leaders were specially honored-none could eat before they did-but Jesus was among people as One Who served. He was "meek and lowly of heart," a clear contrast with the "Teacher of Righteousness." In any case, the "Teacher of Righteousness" acknowledged that he looked on to the coming of Messiah. But Jesus sat by a well in Samaria and said that He Himself was the Messiah (John 4:25, 26). He read a Messianic passage from Isaiah in the Synagogue at Nazareth and then declared that the Scripture was even then fulfilled (Isaiah 61:1, 2, cf. Luke 4:17-21).

The Dead Sea community were looking for at least two, and possibly even four, Messianic figures. One was to be of the Kingly Davidic line, and one was to come from the priestly line of Aaron. They could not reconcile Kingly and Priestly functions, as foretold in their Prophets, in one Messiah-so they looked for two. They also expected the Prophet like unto Moses, and a recent translation published shows that they expected one after the Order of Melchizedek also. To the Jews of the first century BC such concepts seemed quite incapable of reconciliation. But in the fullness of time Jesus was born, and "served Himself heir" to each of these seemingly opposite concepts.

### The Dead Sea Scrolls and Melchizedek

One Scroll was about the mysterious figure of Melchizedek. He is referred to in only two places in the Old Testament-at Genesis 14 and again at Psalm 110:4, but his work is elaborated in the Epistle to the Hebrews at chapters 5 and 7. Through the centuries the Christian Church has continually seen this Melchizedek as an historic type of Christ.

From Qumran comes a translation of 13 fragments found in Cave 11. The date ascribed to these fragments is the first half of the first Christian century, and it is interesting to see the way this Qumran community, at almost the same time when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, thought of Melchizedek in a somewhat similar way to that presented in the New Testament Epistle.

In these new fragments Melchizedek; is associated with a whole series of Old Testament quotations-at Leviticus 25 with special reference to the judgment of God, and at Isaiah 52 with the herald "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the herald proclaiming peace, the herald of good proclaiming salvation, and saying to Zion, "Your God and King!" They think of Melchizedek as the herald, and in this context we read, "And Melchizedek shall exact the vengeance of the judgments of God from the hand of Belial and from the hands of all the spirits of his lot." In this Scroll He is linked with the favor of God, and with the judgment of God, and is able to call alongside him the angelic spirits of heaven.

We find also that the herald of good news is not only identified with Melchizedek, but also specifically with the Messiah. We quote from the Qumran fragment:

"And the herald is that Anointed One about whom Daniel said that he is the herald of good proclaiming salvation."

It is interesting to see this identification of the herald with the Messiah and with Melchizedek, and it is also possible that Jewish thought identified him with Michael the Archangel, for Jewish tradition looked on Melchizedek as High Priest, and Michael is called the Heavenly High Priest in the Babylonian Talmud. In this Qumran text Melchizedek is specifically referred to as Elohim-as God-and they thought of him as a Heavenly redemption figure.

There are other parallels to New Testament usage, for Melchizedek is also the one who proclaims release. At Luke 4:18 we find our Lord Himself is shown as the Anointed Servant of Jehovah. Who also is able to proclaim release to captives. That is just what these Dead Sea cave people say about Melchizedek. They look on him as the herald, the one who proclaims peace, and, in a way they cannot quite understand, they are looking on to Melchizedek, a heavenly figure who brings redemption to his people.

Though the Qumran fragments clearly have no influence on the New Testament text-for that commentary in Hebrews is limited to the two Old Testament references as such-yet it is of interest to find the similarity of approach in these two "Jewish" writings, for each exalts Melchizedek and views him as a heavenly redemption figure. The New Testament application shows the relationship of Jesus Christ, giving a picture of Him Who has no beginning of days. It clearly recognizes that He is NOT of the line of Levi (Hebrews 7:13-22). His is an eternal priesthood.

### A Scroll of Messianic Prophecies

We said that the Qumran community had a Scroll of Messianic prophecies, but these excluded those concerning the Suffering Servant (as in Isaiah 53). How could their glorious King be despised and rejected of men? Surely His own people would riot hide their faces from Him! And so it must be some other figure-a King or a Prophet, or perhaps Israel itself, or the faithful remnant, or even the individual Jew. This confusion is perhaps reflected in Peter's attempted rebuke of the Lord Jesus Christ when He announced His coming death, and it partly explains the disciples' confusion and lack of comprehension until after the resurrection Of Christ.

All these strands about the Messiah came together perfectly in the Person of Jesus Christ. He was the Son of David, born in the royal city of Bethlehem; He was the Son of Man, Who was also the eternal High Priest, NOT after the line of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek. He was the Suffering Servant, for though there could be a partial fulfillment of "the Servant Songs" in the sufferings of the nation or of other individuals, He was the perfect fulfillment, as shown for instance by a comparison of Isaiah 53:7, 8 with Acts 8:32-35. There we read that Philip preached about Jesus as the Suffering Servant to the Ethiopian Eunuch, his "proof-text" coming from one of the Servant Songs.

It was tragic that despite this intense searching for the Messiah at the very time when Christ was born, when He offered Himself He was completely rejected by His own nation. But even in this prophecy was fulfilled.

### How are the Scrolls Significant for Old Testament Study?

We have already touched on certain significant asp", such as the importance of -having a Scroll of Isaiah pre-dating Christ's life on earth. We have seen that the findings of these manuscripts meant that we now had copies of Hebrew Scriptures 1,000 years earlier than previously, for before 1947 the earliest Hebrew Old Testament texts dated to the 9th century AD.

The Scrolls also revealed that three strands of Old Testament writings were known and used by this community. These strands were the older Hebrew texts, the Septuagint (Greek translation), and the Samaritan version. The use of these three strands has helped scholars to determine probable correct renderings at points of dispute.

The variations from the accepted text were not very significant. Even though there were now Hebrew texts 1,000 years earlier than the previous Hebrew manuscripts, scholars have been surprised at the relatively small differences from the accepted text. Sometimes in fact it has been shown that the Dead Sea Scrolls were inferior to the text behind the Septuagint (Greek) version. This is not altogether surprising, for when the great work of the Septuagint version was commenced in Alexandria by Jewish scholars in the 3rd century BC, these were especially chosen men of outstanding ability. It is not really surprising that their work was of such a high order. The Dead Sea Scroll scribes were not necessarily outstanding scholars.

Although the Scrolls have cleared up a few minor points, not one aspect of doctrine is affected by the Manuscripts from the Dead Sea. One phrase at Isaiah 21:8 should read, "And he who saw cried, 'My Lord'." Here the word "lion" is amended to read, "he who saw," this being a slight change in vowels only (the original Hebrew had no vowels, and such a wrong reading is easily understood). Another point is that "the land of Sinirn" referred to at Isaiah 49:12 should be "Syene," Geb, in Upper Egypt, and not the distant country of China.

A problem as to the reference to Genesis 46:26, 27 in Acts 7:14 (Stephen's address) disappears when we find that the Dead Sea Scrolls have the Genesis text saying "three score and fifteen," just as in Stephen's address. Our received text of Genesis had become corrupted at this point.

We saw how these communities related the Old Testament to their own background, and also that they had a Scroll of Old Testament Messianic prophecies which they failed to see fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth-though possibly John the Baptist was one of their number who did have spiritual perception as he recognized that this was "He who should come" (Luke 7:20).

## **An Old Testament Prophecy About John the Baptist**

It is sometimes conjectured that John the Baptist was at one time a member of the Qumran community, for we read at Luke 1:80 that before his public ministry he spent time in the Judean wilderness. This could have been in the general area of Qumran. He regarded himself as “a voice crying in the wilderness” (Isaiah 40, Mark 1: 3, 4).

This was a favorite quotation for the Qumran community, and they seem to have regarded themselves as the embodiment of “a voice crying in the wilderness.” It is, of course, possible that John was correcting their false conception, but it seems more likely that he and they were alike quoting from the Old Testament Scriptures, those Scriptures were their common heritage and background. Perhaps it is relevant to point out that John employed this concept in a far more personal and individual way than did the Qumran community, and indeed he gave it a new prophetic significance. Thus the argument because of their mutual use of this verse is not conclusive as to John’s being a member of the community.

However, John’s parents were orthodox Jews and he himself was challenged by the Jewish leaders as to the authority by which he acted. John may have been a member of the community for a time, or he may simply have drawn on the same Jewish sources (in the Old Testament) from which the Dead Sea community also drew.

But perhaps the greatest significance has been to bolster confidence in the texts of the Old Testament Scriptures already in our hands. Despite sweeping assertions too easily made soon after the Scrolls began to be published, the Old Testament as we have it has stood the investigation in a way that is little short of amazing.

## **How are the Scrolls Significant for New Testament Study?**

The Scrolls also give us considerable insight into the life and hopes of Jewish people prior to New Testament times, and so they are a significant contribution to our knowledge of Jewish history and New Testament documents. We have touched on some aspects of significance for New Testament study, for the two Testaments are inter-related. However, there are other aspects directly related to the New Testament.

Soon after the Scrolls were first discovered, extravagant claims were made, it even being asserted that here was the true basis of the Christian Gospel, with the “Teacher of Righteousness” being Jesus Christ. However, this was a title for the successive leaders of the community and the “Teacher” never claimed to be the Messiah. The teachings of the community were in fact greatly different from those of Jesus Christ.

## **Similarities to Qumran?**

Possibly one of the closest points of similarity between the teachings of Jesus and Qumran is at Matthew 18:15 where the procedure for dealing with an errant brother is outlined—he is to be personally reproved, and, if this is not effective, witnesses are to be called. Only if this is not also effective is the matter to be brought before the Assembly (Church). In somewhat similar manner, the sectaries at Qumran were admonished not to reprove one of the community in anger nor to bring one of the members before the whole community until he had first been reproved before witnesses.

Sometimes other similarities have been pointed to, such as the fact of a Teacher plus twelve disciples, having goods in common, the role of baptism, and the sharing of a communal meal. But none of these proves direct association with Qumran. The idea of “the twelve” stems from the patriarchs, and so has a Jewish background common to Christianity and to Qumran.

Having goods in common was enforced at Qumran; it was not so in the history of the early Church, and was but a temporary practice (which, however, taught important principles) at Acts 4:32.

“Baptism” at Qumran was a daily rite—part of the regular ritual. In any case, baptism was also a common Jewish practice not restricted to the Dead Sea community.

At Qumran that daily baptism was quite different from the baptism of John or, later, the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ. For His disciples, baptism was not something that took place every day—it was a baptism of identification. In John’s case it was recognizing the need for repentance, recognizing that the kingdom of God was at hand. The baptism which the Lord Jesus Christ instituted and endorsed for His disciples was an identification with Himself in death, burial and resurrection. There was a spiritual symbol demonstrated in an outward rite. It took place once, and that was final—it was quite different from the practiced at Qumran.

As to the communal meal, again the differences are far more important than any surface similarities. The “communion” of the New Testament is probably weekly, not daily; it has special religious significance and is not merely the daily meal associated with religion, in that the priest was the first to eat, with others very much in subjection. In fact, this was a point of contrast to the spirit displayed by Christ Who was among His disciples as One Who Served, and would enjoin His disciples to take the lowliest place at a meal. In any case the Lord’s communion was celebrated in association with the preparation for the Passover. It pointed on to “Christ our Passover, sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). The Lord’s Supper was clearly associated with His death—there was no such association with the Teacher of Righteousness.

Rather wild claims have also been made as to the crucifixion and resurrection of the Teacher of Righteousness. These claims demand interpretations beyond what the texts themselves allow; on the other hand the statements in the New Testament as to the death and resurrection of Christ are very clear and leave no doubt as to the events they describe. Another essential difference

is that the Dead Sea community looked for Messianic figures who were yet to come while the New Testament told of the Messiah Who HAD come.

## **Differences Greater Than Similarities**

The main differences are well summarized by A. N. Gilkes:

“These differences between Jesus and The Teacher,’ between Christian and Essene, go very deep and very wide. Nothing less than the word ‘chasm’ could describe the difference between what the Gospels tell us of the life and personality of Jesus, and the little we know of the Teachers. For the Christian, too, there stretches and shines between them the whole majesty of the Incarnation. There is no suggestion that the Teacher was a divine being during his time on earth or that he died for others; there is not a word about redemption, about his cross and passion, or ‘his precious death and burial, or his glorious resurrection and ascension and the coming of the Holy Ghost.’” [“The Impact of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” page 141.] Another significant conclusion from the Dead Sea Scrolls is that the background to John's Gospel is Judean, and not Hellenistic (i.e., not Greek). John uses parallels such as “light and darkness” and various other expressions which were Jewish in background, as shown by their use at Qumran. “Sons of light,” “brotherly love,” “fountain of living water,” “truth and perversity,” these are common to John and to Qumran.

Another point is that the dualism of John's Gospel is not that of the Gnostics whose teachings were spreading at the end of the 1st Century AD, nor were they those of Hellenizing Jews such as Philo of Alexandria. The new current of thought since the finding of the scrolls is to place much of the material of John's Gospel as being before the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.

As A. N. Gilkes says: “It would be easy to continue the list of resemblance’s in idea and in phrasing-to compare the Manual's view of creation: ‘Apart from him, nothing is done’ with John's: ‘Without him was not anything made that hath been made’, or to set the Damascus Document: ‘they acted treacherously and departed from the spring of living waters’ alongside Christ's utterance: ‘The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.’”

“But we must also strike a balance by pointing out once more the enormous gap between Essene and Christian. In spite of one noble saying in the Manual already quoted (‘I will repay no man with evil’) those who inculcate hatred to all who are not members of their Brotherhood can hardly claim kinship with the irenic writer of the First Epistle of John. The whole vast range of specifically Christian thought-the whole difference Which Christ makes-separates the two.”

## **The Date, Purpose and Style of John's Gospel**

One consequence is that scholars have reconsidered their views as to the date of John's writing, especially the Gospel, which many now date to between 50 and 70 AD. There are pointers to this within the Gospel itself, as when we read at John 5:2, “Now there is in Jerusalem a pool, which is called in Hebrew ‘Bethesda’.” This points to a date before Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, for Bethesda was included in that destruction.

That same verse also touches on another conclusion from the Dead Sea Scrolls: that Hebrew was widely used-spoken as well as written-in the times of Christ, for we now know that other writings besides 23 priestly documents were in Hebrew. Thus the references to Hebrew (e.g. Gabbatha, the Pavement; Golgotha the Place of the Skull, the inscription over the cross, Paul at Caesarea) should possibly be accepted at face value and not taken to mean the sister language Aramaic. After all, Jesus-read from a Hebrew scroll at Nazareth (Luke 4).

It is possible that one of John's purposes is to show that Jesus is the great “Prophet like unto Moses,” thus we find the record of John the Baptist being asked if he is a prophet (John 1:21) and then after the 5,000 had been fed we listen as the people cry, “This is of a truth the Prophet that should come into the world” (John 6:14; cf. John 7:40). John showed that the Lord Jesus Christ could feed a multitude in the wilderness just as remarkably as Moses could.

We have already seen that as a result of the Dead Sea Scrolls it has been increasingly recognized that John's Gospel is not Greek but Jewish. It is also Palestinian, for it is clearly against the same background, humanly speaking, as these writings of the Dead Sea Scroll community at Qumran. Much of the writing of the Dead Sea Scrolls is Hellenistic in the sense that it utilizes Greek terminology, but the Manual of Discipline and other Dead Sea documents make it clear that the Hellenistic vocabulary is merely the vehicle by which Hebrew forms are expressed.

We stress that there are also great differences from the Qumran community-as when we read the High Priestly prayer at John 17: “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19). While the language itself has clear affinities to the language of Qumran, the concept of sanctification is entirely different. The Teacher of Righteousness of Qumran needed personal cleansing, but Jesus Christ did not need such personal purification. He gave Himself that others might be redeemed from sin because of His purity-this One was the sinless Son of God who could offer redemption to His people by the substitutionary sacrifice of Himself.

Another great difference was that the Qumran community did its utmost to guard its secrets to the death. It was essentially an “introspective motivation” while Christianity did its utmost to be a missionary cause, zealously presenting its message to the ends of the earth, as made clear by the “Great Commission.” The Qumran leader issued stringent laws to be applied to all areas of life but Jesus went beyond such external laws and dealt with the “root” - with motivation itself. The Apostle Paul followed and made it clear that legalism was not the basis of Christian teaching. The Christian Church has a unique vision in the teachings of Jesus Christ,

offering as He does communion stretching beyond national boundaries, with the promise of participation in a new Kingdom that shall be eternal. The teachings of Qumran were different from the teachings of Paul, as shown by Professor F. F. Bruce:

“When a man was admitted to the covenanted community, he had to swear a solemn vow to return to the law of Moses with all his heart and shun all contact with ungodly men. While he was doing so, the priests recited blessings on those who set their hearts to walk in God's ways, and the Levites recited the curses which would descend on those who committed apostasy.” [Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scroll, page 116-117.]

The following excellent summary of the Qumran organization is from that same volume: “The organization of the community was hierarchical: there were priests (called variously 'sons of Aaron' or 'sons of Zadok'), Levites, elders, and the rank and file. Certain important matters were to be decided by lot, which was cast under the direction of the sons of Aaron. This preserved the tradition of earlier days in Israel where the will of God was ascertained by the priests by means of the sacred lot, the Urim, and Thummim.

“From time to time a general assembly of the community was held-'the session of the many,' as it was called. Rules of precedence were laid down with regard to the taking of their seats first the priests, then the elders, then the rest of the people, each in his position “and standing orders for the conduct of the meeting were strictly enforced. Anyone who wished to speak had to stand up and say: 'I have a word to speak to the many.' If he received permission from the leaders, he might speak. And while he was speaking no other member might interrupt him. Such unseemly behavior as speaking foolishly, laughing out loud, sleeping while the session was in progress, or leaving the room too often without due cause, received appropriate punishment.” [Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scroll, page 116-117.]

Two points about the Scrolls should be mentioned in passing. Professor John Allegro put forward a totally unacceptable hypothesis that early Christians were members of a mushroom cult. He argued that names such as Boanerges were associated with drug addiction. His hypothesis has been effectively answered by others.

The second point is the claim by a Jesuit scholar, Joseph O'Callaghan, that fragments from Cave 7 are parts of early New Testament documents, especially Mark and Timothy-dating Mark to about A.D.50. The evidence is not convincing. His hypothesis involves emendation of three words of Mark, but investigation of the Scroll itself reveals that certain “Greek letters” he found in his photocopy were actually holes in the manuscript. It seems a genuine mistake has been made by a reputable scholar.

There are other interesting points-such as the mention of the Pool of Bethesda in the Copper Scroll (referred to above). Light is also thrown on various words and phrases in the New Testament-such, as the expression “because of the angels” at 1 Corinthians 11:10. In the battle against the forces of evil, soldiers were to be pure “because of the angels who accompany the troops” -so states the War Scroll. If offended by impurity.

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