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Abstract The Dead Sea Scrolls constitute a seminal resource for understanding the context of the early Christian community and several New Testament texts. Soon after their discovery, some very sensational claims were made about the Qumran community and its literature (the scrolls) in terms of their connection to Jesus and his followers. While these have largely been dismissed, and serious and persistent scholarship over the years has shown that there were differences between the Qumran community and early Christianity, significant similarities do exist. These similarities line up largely according to the following categories: common scripture and its interpretation, theological ideas, vocabulary and practices, importance of the temple, eschatological and apocalyptic orientation, and the centrality of messianic expectations. This essay attempts to highlight some of the most significant of these parallels to show that both the New Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls are products of the same roots, that we should expect to find certain commonalities, and that to fully understand one corpus of writings, we have to know something about the other.

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS AND THE WORLD OF JESUS

Andrew C. Skinner

The Dead Sea Scrolls, according to the late Professor Yigael Yadin, “are undoubtedly the most important discovery found in Israel in the field of the Bible and history of Judaism and Christianity.”¹ Indeed, these manuscript discoveries in the middle decades of the twentieth century (1947–56) provide us a window into the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples as chronicled in the New Testament. They shed light on the birth of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity, as well as on the Qumran covenant community itself. And though there were “major differences between the Qumran literature and early Christian literature and between the Qumran community and the early Christian community, nevertheless, they were also remarkably similar in theological vocabulary, in some major doctrinal tenets, and in several organizational and ritual practices.”² By looking at some of these parallels we may therefore come to more fully understand and appreciate the world of Jesus.

1. As cited in Hanan Eshel, *Qumran* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2009), 7.

2. James C. VanderKam, “The Scrolls and Early Christianity,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2007), 66.

Qumran and Christianity: Early Theories

As early as 1950, only three years after Cave 1 was discovered with its treasure trove of manuscripts, the French epigrapher André Dupont-Sommer began drawing connections between the Qumran community and Christianity. He argued that Qumran's leader, the Teacher of Righteousness, looked a lot like Jesus.

The Galilean Master . . . appears in many respects as an astonishing reincarnation of the Master of Justice [the Teacher of Righteousness in the scrolls]. Like the latter He preached penitence, poverty, humility, love of one's neighbour, chastity. Like him, He prescribed the observance of the Law of Moses, the whole Law, but the Law finished and perfected, thanks to His own revelations. Like him He was the Elect and the Messiah of God, the Messiah redeemer of the world. Like him He was the object of the hostility of the priests, the party of the Sadducees. Like him He was condemned and put to death. Like him He pronounced judgement on Jerusalem, which was taken and destroyed by the Romans for having put Him to death. Like him, at the end of time, He will be the supreme judge. Like him He founded a Church whose adherents fervently awaited His glorious return.³

Dupont-Sommer stopped short of identifying Jesus as the Teacher of Righteousness, the legendary leader of the Qumran community; he also did not explicitly equate the Qumran covenanters with the Christian movement. However, Dupont-Sommer's ruminations greatly influenced American writer Edmund Wilson, who made the next leap. He flatly claimed that the Qumran sect and early Christianity were "the successive phases of a [single] movement,"⁴ that Qumran "more than Bethlehem or Nazareth [was] the cradle of

3. André Dupont-Sommer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Preliminary Survey* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 99.

4. Edmund Wilson, *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 95.

Christianity.”⁵ Just a year later, in 1956, John Allegro, who was a member of the international editorial team working on the scrolls, gave a series of lectures on BBC radio regarding his interpretation of the scrolls’ contents. In one lecture he described how the Wicked Priest, opponent of the Teacher of Righteousness, had delivered the latter into the hands of the Gentiles (Romans) to be crucified.

When the Jewish king had left and peace descended once more on Qumran, the scattered community returned and took down the broken body of their Master, to stand guard over it until the Judgment Day. For they believed that the terrible events of their time were surely heralding the Visitation of God Himself. . . . In that glorious day, they believed their Master would rise again, and lead his faithful flock, the people of the New Testament, as they called themselves, to a new and purified Jerusalem.⁶

After John Allegro’s BBC radio broadcasts, his colleagues on the scrolls publication team wrote a letter to the *Times* of London refuting Allegro’s ideas and, though not intending to do so, answering the earlier assertions and bold statements of Edmund Wilson. The letter, signed by five of the greatest names in early scrolls research—Roland de Vaux, Jozef Milik, John Strugnell, Patrick Skehan, and Jean Starcky—reads:

It has come to our attention that considerable controversy is being caused by certain broadcast statements of Mr. John Allegro, of the University of Manchester, concerning the Dead Sea Scrolls. We refer particularly to such statements as imply that in these scrolls a close connection is to be found between a supposed crucifixion of the “teacher of righteousness” of the Essene sect and the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The announced opinion of Mr. Allegro might seem to

5. Wilson, *Scrolls from the Dead Sea*, 98.

6. J. M. Allegro, Broadcast Talk for BBC Northern Home Service, 23 January 1956, as reported in Judith Anne Brown, *John Marco Allegro: The Maverick of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 77.

have special weight, since he is one of the group of scholars engaged in editing yet-unpublished writings from Qumran.

In view of the broad repercussions of his statements, and the fact that the materials on which they are based are not yet available to the public, we, his colleagues, feel obliged to make the following statement. There are no unpublished texts at the disposal of Mr. Allegro other than those of which the originals are at present in the Palestine Archaeological Museum where we are working. Upon the appearance in the press of citations from Mr. Allegro's broadcasts we have reviewed all the pertinent materials, published and unpublished. We are unable to see in the texts the "findings" of Mr. Allegro.

We find no crucifixion of the "teacher," no deposition from the cross, and no "broken body of their Master" to be stood guard over until Judgment Day. Therefore there is no "well-defined Essenic pattern into which Jesus of Nazareth fits," as Mr. Allegro is alleged in one report to have said. It is our conviction that either he has misread the texts or he has built up a chain of conjectures which the materials do not support.⁷

Closer to our own day, three other scholars have put forward ideas that resemble those of the 1950s. Robert Eisenman of California State at Long Beach claims that Qumran was a community that existed for centuries and included Ezra, Judas Maccabee, John the Baptist, Jesus, and James the brother of Jesus. Barbara Thiering of the University of Sydney, Australia, argues that John the Baptist was the Teacher of Righteousness and Jesus was the Wicked Priest mentioned in the Qumran texts. J. L. Teicher of Cambridge University believes that the apostle Paul was the Wicked Priest.⁸ Though few, if any, authorities on the scrolls are persuaded by these propositions, there are certainly connections between the Dead Sea Scrolls and early Christianity. But

7. Quoted in Hershel Shanks, *The Copper Scroll and the Search for the Temple Treasure* (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2007), 31–32.

8. These positions are summarized in VanderKam, "Scrolls and Early Christianity," 66.

we must be careful to follow the evidence and not overstep it—and there is plenty of evidence, with no need to invent more. (In 1966 a work of over 300 pages, *Qumran und das Neue Testament*, was published by Herbert Braun; he attempted to list every passage in the New Testament for which a parallel existed at Qumran.)⁹ Because the Essenes at Qumran and the early Christians in Galilee and Jerusalem shared a common tradition in Judaism and lived on the same soil of Roman Judea, we should expect to find similar ideas and practices between the two without needing to manufacture identifications for the anonymous figures mentioned in the scrolls.

Common Scripture

No known figures from the New Testament are explicitly mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls. No copies of clear and undisputed New Testament texts have been found at Qumran. At least two scholars claim to have identified tiny fragments from Cave 7 as New Testament passages. But these identifications have been rejected by almost all Dead Sea Scroll scholars.¹⁰ One of the largest of the fragments, 7Q5, preserves no more than twenty partial or whole letters. The only full word is *kai* (Greek “and”). Yet, Carsten Thiede argued that 7Q5 can be reconstructed as Mark 6:52–53 (Jesus walking on water). But to make this claim fit the evidence, Thiede was required to posit an unattested textual variant for Mark 6 and an unusual grammatical construction—not convincing.¹¹ The best recent scholarship on the Greek fragments from Cave 7 has concluded that several of them are from the pseudepigraphal book of *1 Enoch*.¹² This identification underscores the importance of *1 Enoch* for the Qumran community. It was perhaps regarded as part of their canon, which was more expansive

9. Herbert Braun, *Qumran und das Neue Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1966).

10. See two summaries; the briefer is Timothy H. Lim, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 107. The more comprehensive is James VanderKam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: HarperSan Francisco, 2002), 311–20.

11. Lim, *Dead Sea Scrolls: A Very Short Introduction*, 107–8.

12. VanderKam and Flint, *Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 316–20.

than the canon subscribed to by almost all Jewish and Christian communities today.

Cave 7 is an unusual repository since it preserved only Greek texts written on papyrus, whereas most of the other Qumran texts were written on leather in Hebrew or Aramaic. This, too, is significant for our understanding of Jesus's world. For in the words of Bruce Chilton, "it was often said that Jesus spoke Greek rather than Aramaic, but the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls shows that Aramaic was used during the first century and earlier, and the discovery of other scrolls near Qumran establishes that the usage of Aramaic persisted there until the second century C.E."¹³

The prominence of certain biblical texts at Qumran parallels the way Jesus used the Bible in his ministry. The Dead Sea Scrolls are usually divided into three categories, based on content: biblical texts, apocryphal and pseudepigraphal texts (the category into which *1 Enoch* fits), and sectarian texts or documents. Biblical texts comprise about 25 percent of the total number of manuscripts, or portions of manuscripts, found. Complete copies or fragments of copies of every book of the Hebrew Bible (Christian Old Testament) have been found except for the book of Esther. Copies of Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Psalms were the most numerous of the biblical texts discovered. Among biblical scrolls, 30 surviving manuscripts of Deuteronomy were found, 21 of Isaiah, and 36 of the Psalms.¹⁴ Significantly, Jesus also quoted more often from Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Psalms than from other books of the Old Testament. Perhaps this reflects a common didactic principle in Judaism of this era, or perhaps it reflects a general mind-set possessed by eschatological communities (groups embracing a theology focused on the last days and end of times). It certainly tells us how these two messianic congregations valued or ranked books of the Hebrew Bible.

13. Bruce Chilton, "Jesus, a Galilean Rabbi," in *Who Was Jesus? A Jewish-Christian Dialogue* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 155.

14. Emanuel Tov, "Categorized List of the 'Biblical Texts,'" in *The Texts from the Judaean Desert: Indices and An Introduction to the Discoveries in the Judaean Desert Series*, DJD XXXIX, ed. Emanuel Tov (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 167–76.

One of the real treasure troves from Qumran was found in Cave 1. It contained two scrolls of Isaiah. The first one, the Great Isaiah Scroll, was found preserved in a clay jar, and is a complete manuscript of the entire book, all 66 chapters, and measures 7.34 meters in length. The second one is only fragmentary. The texts of the two differ in style. The complete scroll is described as coarser than the second, the scribe less exacting over spelling, exchanging difficult words for more common ones, and sometimes incorporating Aramaic words into the text. The scribe of the second Isaiah scroll copied a text which followed the Masoretic text very closely.¹⁵ The Masoretic text (Hebrew *masora* meaning “traditional”) is the standardized version of the Hebrew text from which the King James Old Testament was produced. Obviously, as the artifactual evidence demonstrates, Isaiah was very important to the covenant makers at Qumran. In this regard, Latter-day Saints are reminded of Jesus’s words to the Nephites soon after his resurrection: “a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah” (3 Nephi 23:1). This suggests the importance of Isaiah to the early church in the Old World in Jesus’s day as well.

The Qumran covenanters “interpreted Scripture above all *as relating to themselves in the present*.”¹⁶ A prime example is the Habakkuk Peshier where the Assyrians and Egyptians were reinterpreted as references to the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires, which were contemporary with the early Qumran community. Another example is Ezekiel. The Qumran inhabitants understood themselves in terms of Ezekiel’s prophecy. The site of Qumran was chosen as their living site because that is where “Ezekiel’s mighty, healing river would flow into the Dead Sea,”¹⁷ healing it—as Joseph Smith also said¹⁸—and inaugurating a new Eden, heaven on earth. This interpretive principle resonates with

15. Eshel, *Qumran*, 18.

16. David Noel Freedman and Pam Fox Kuhlken, *What Are the Dead Sea Scrolls and Why Do They Matter?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 101, emphasis in the original.

17. Freedman and Kuhlken, *What Are the Dead Sea Scrolls?*, 103.

18. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 286.

Latter-day Saints because of the “likening” principle articulated by Nephi: “for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23).

This “likening principle” was not foreign to the authors of the synoptic gospels. This is apparent as they report on John the Baptist’s ministry as a forerunner. All three quote Isaiah 40:3 and apply it to John, stating that he came preaching in the wilderness of Judea like “the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Matthew 3:3).¹⁹ In other words, like a royal herald, announcing the coming of the king and clearing the path before him, so came John preparing the way for Jesus, the true king of the Jews.

But the synoptic authors do more here than just liken scripture to their own circumstances. They use the very same passage to describe John’s mission as the Qumran community used to describe its mission—Isaiah 40:3. The *Community Rule* quotes this passage to affirm that the community was literally fulfilling the prophet’s injunction by living in the wilderness and preparing the way of the Lord through study of the law:

And when these become members of the Community in Israel according to all these rules, they shall separate from the habitation of unjust men and shall go into the wilderness to prepare there the way of Him; as it is written, *Prepare in the wilderness the way of . . . , make straight in the desert a path for our God* (Isa. xl, 3). This (path) is the study of the Law which He commanded by the hand of Moses, that they may do according to all that has been revealed from age to age, and as the Prophets have revealed by His Holy Spirit.²⁰

Of course one notes that both the prophets and the Holy Spirit were immensely important in the early Church of Jesus Christ, as well as at Qumran. In fact, these are major themes in both groups. However,

19. See Mark 1:3 and Luke 3:4.

20. *Community Rule* VIII, 12–15, in Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 109, emphasis in the original.

it is the connection between John the Baptist and the Qumran covenanters that is most striking in this discussion. John comes preaching in the wilderness of Judea—the very location of the Dead Sea Scroll community. He is described as the embodiment of the very same text that the Qumran community believed itself to embody or exemplify. He proclaims his message with the same eschatological fervency as the Qumran covenanters.²¹ He preaches and performs the baptism of repentance, which parallels the Qumran concept of ritual immersion for cleansing and sanctification. From the *Community Rule* we read that a member of the community “shall neither be purified by atonement, nor cleansed by purifying waters, nor sanctified by seas and rivers, nor washed clean with any ablution” if “he despises the precepts of God.”²² Ritual immersion at Qumran was explicitly associated with the tenets of repentance and sanctification. Also, “They shall not enter the water to partake of the pure Meal of the men of holiness [saints], for they shall not be cleansed unless they turn from their wickedness: for all who transgress His word are unclean.”²³

The most striking feature of the Qumran archaeological site is its complex gravity-flow system of interconnected cisterns and decantation pools—in the midst of a desert landscape. Almost every scholar believes that at least some of these cisterns were used as *miqveot*, ritual immersion pools. While the argument cannot be proved that John the Baptist was associated with the Essenes at Qumran, his circumstances certainly are suggestive. William H. Brownlee was among the first to propose that John the Baptist may well have been raised by the Essenes at Qumran, who, says Josephus, adopted the young children of others and taught them their principles.²⁴

21. See C. Marvin Pate, *Communities of the Last Days* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 81. Compare, for example, Luke 3:1–20 with 1QS III–IV (see Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 100–103).

22. *Community Rule* III, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 100–101.

23. *Community Rule* IV, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 104.

24. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.120; see William H. Brownlee, “John the Baptist in the New Light of Ancient Scrolls,” in *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, ed. Krister Stendahl (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 33–53.

Others have confirmed that “no other person in the NT [New Testament] is as likely a candidate for being connected with the Qumran community as John the Baptist.”²⁵ The parallels between John the Baptist and the Qumran community, as we have seen, are quite remarkable (geography, association with Isaiah 40:3, eschatological fervency of messages, and ritual-cleansing practices). But the final point is also the most significant. In the end, John did not associate himself with the messianic expectation at Qumran, but the messianic expectation centered in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. At Qumran “there was the expectancy of three great eschatological figures who would inaugurate the Messianic age: a prophetic forerunner, an anointed [messianic] priest, and an anointed [messianic] king.”²⁶ John identified Jesus as the sole Messiah (John 1:1–29) and chose to answer the call to serve as the latter’s prophet-priest forerunner.

Theology and Language

It has been argued that concepts and language from Qumran texts were specifically appropriated by New Testament authors and edited into their texts. For example, 2 Corinthians 6:14–15 and 17 reads: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? . . . Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”

This passage sounds very much like Qumran phraseology with its light-darkness dualism, opposition to unbelief and impurity, and its mention of Belial, identified in Qumran texts as “the Prince of Darkness.”²⁷ In the New Testament, the term *Belial* occurs only in 2 Corinthians 6:15, but is plentiful at Qumran in several texts, especially the *Hymns Scroll*. In fact, the *Damascus Document* refers to “the Prince of Lights and Belial,” which, again, reflects the

25. Pate, *Communities of the Last Days*, 81.

26. Brownlee, “John the Baptist,” 44.

27. *Testament of Amram*, frg. 2, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 572.

light-darkness duality.²⁸ This led one scholar, Pierre Benoit, to call 2 Corinthians 6:14–17 “a meteor fallen from the heaven of Qumran into Paul’s epistle.”²⁹

The idea of a worldview shaped by dualism is an especially striking and poignant parallel between the early Christians and the Dead Sea Scrolls community since in the Old Testament “there is really no predominant dualism.”³⁰ Raymond Brown has stated,

The outstanding resemblance between the Scrolls and the New Testament seems to be the modified dualism which is prevalent in both. By dualism we mean the doctrine that the universe is under the dominion of two opposing principles, one good and the other evil. Modified dualism adds the corrective that these principles are not uncreated, but are both dependent on God the Creator. . . . All men are aligned in two opposing forces, the one of light and truth, the other of darkness and perversion, with each faction ruled by a spirit or prince.³¹

Light-dark dualism is a well-attested theme in the writings of John. In the opening verses of the prologue to his gospel he refers to Jesus as the life which “was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:4–5). John details Jesus’s exchange with Nicodemus in which the theme of light versus darkness plays an important role:

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither

28. *Damascus Document IV*, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 133.

29. Quoted in Freedman and Kuhlken, *What Are the Dead Sea Scrolls?*, 94.

30. Raymond E. Brown, “The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles,” in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, 184.

31. Brown, “Qumran Scrolls,” 184–85.

cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (John 3:18–21)

During the last week of his ministry, John reports Jesus's teachings to the people, which featured light-dark dualism. "Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them" (John 12:35–36).

John's message is clear: Jesus is the light, and rejection of him is darkness. But absent from this construct is the kind of militant categorization seen in the Qumran texts. At Qumran, every person automatically falls into one of two categories: the Children of Light or the Children of Darkness. "Basically, everyone who was not an Essene—a Child or Son of Light—would be purged from existence, destroyed forever by God. And the Essenes—as 'merciful' Children of Light—appeared to relish this thought."³²

Other examples (among many) of New Testament passages that are directly linked to Qumran texts, and thus indicate that New Testament figures either borrowed from Qumran texts or drew from a common fund of truths, may be found in the Sermon on the Mount. First, Matthew 5:3 reports that Jesus used the phrase *poor in spirit* in his first beatitude. This same phrase is found at Qumran in a Cave 1 text, the *War Scroll*, or more properly, the *War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (note again the light-dark dualism). But, impressively, the phrase is found nowhere else. The text from Qumran reads: "Among the poor in spirit [there is power] over the hard of heart, and by the perfect of way all the nations of wickedness have come to an end: not one of their mighty men stands, but we are the remnant [of Thy people.]"³³

Jesus uses the phrase *poor in spirit* to describe the qualities of the exalted—those who inherit the kingdom of heaven. In doing so, he

32. Freedman and Kuhlken, *What Are the Dead Sea Scrolls?*, 47–48.

33. *War Scroll* XIV, 7 (1QM), in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 180.

also gives to his disciples something of “a revelation of his own character.”³⁴ The intent at Qumran is different, where the overriding concern is power and victory over the sons of darkness (basically, everyone outside the Qumran community). This led Kurt Schubert to state that the “first of the beatitudes . . . indicates a conscious awareness of Essene thought and an intention of Jesus to make clear his stand against their sect. . . . Accordingly, on the basis of the introductory words of the Sermon on the Mount alone, it does not seem improbable that Jesus’s audience consisted of people who might have been familiar with Essene teaching.”³⁵

In support of Schubert’s contention, another passage in the sermon, following the Beatitudes, appears quite striking. In a series of formulaic injunctions (“You have heard it said . . . but, I say unto you . . .”), Jesus seems to be correcting the Qumran doctrine of love. “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:43–44).

Here Jesus flatly contradicts the idea that people should love their neighbors and hate their enemies. However, hating one’s enemies is precisely what the *Community Rule* advocates in two separate passages: “Love all that He [God] has chosen and hate all that he has rejected,”³⁶ and “These are the rules of conduct for the Master in those times with respect to His loving and hating. Everlasting hatred in a spirit of secrecy for the men of perdition!”³⁷ Of course, men of perdition included basically all who were not part of the Qumran community.

The very form of instruction known as beatitudes has also been found at Qumran. A Cave 4 text, 4Q525, called *Beatitudes*, or the *Blessing of the Wise*, contains beatitudes similar to those found in

34. Harold B. Lee, *Decisions for Successful Living* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), 56.

35. Kurt Schubert, “The Sermon on the Mount and the Qumran Texts,” in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, 121–22.

36. *Community Rule* I, 4, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 98.

37. *Community Rule* IX, 21–23, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 111.

Matthew 5:1–12 or Luke 6:20–23. The word *beatitude* is derived from the Latin *beatus*, meaning “to be happy, fortunate, or blessed,” which is the equivalent of the Greek *makarioi* or the Hebrew *’ashrē*. The expression “Blessed is . . .” or “Blessed are . . .” rests on an ancient Hebrew formula known by Jesus and his followers as well as Qumranites and other Jews; it is found especially in Israel’s psalms. The very first psalm is a case in point: “*Blessed* is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful” (Psalm 1:1).³⁸ So, when Jesus presented his beatitudes, he, like the Qumran inhabitants, was adopting the language of ancient Israel’s great lyric prophet-kings and inspired poets to teach his profound message. Beatitudes, as a didactic form, are also found in intertestamental and rabbinic literature.³⁹ But Jesus put a different twist on them.

A second passage in the Sermon on the Mount for which there is a striking parallel at Qumran concerns the “radical rejection of oaths.”⁴⁰ Jesus said, “Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more

38. See the discussion in Andrew C. Skinner, “Israel’s Ancient Psalms: Cornerstone of the Beatitudes,” in *The Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Gaye Strathearn (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2010), 59–65.

39. Some examples of beatitudes in rabbinic literature include the following: “and R. Johanan b. Zakkai said . . . ‘Happy [blessed] are you, our father Abraham, that Eleazar b. Arakh came forth from your loins’” (T *Ḥagigah* 2:1); “R. Jose the priest went and told what had happened before R. Johanan b. Zakkai, and the latter said, ‘Happy [blessed] are you, happy is she who bore you, happy are my eyes that I have seen this’” (TB *Ḥagigah* 14b); “Happy [blessed] is the king who is praised in his house! Woe to the father who had to banish his children, and woe to the children who had to be banished from the table of their father” (TB *Berakhot* 3a). All of the foregoing are translated in Samuel T. Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament* (New York: KTAV, 1987), 70. For examples of beatitudes in intertestamental literature, see *Psalms of Solomon* 5:18; 6:1; 10:1, and Ben Sira 14:1; 25:8, 9.

40. Schubert, “Sermon on the Mount and the Qumran Texts,” 126.

than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:33–37). Josephus describes the Essenes’ refusal to swear an oath: “Any word of theirs has more force than an oath; swearing they avoid, regarding it as worse than perjury, for they say that one who is not believed without an appeal to God stands condemned already.”⁴¹ Herod himself excused the Essenes from taking an oath of allegiance.⁴² From the *Damascus Document* we read: “It is forbidden to swear by God’s name El, and by God’s name Adonai.”⁴³

A third passage from the Sermon on the Mount finds Jesus commanding his listeners to “resist not evil,” but to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:38–39). The principle, if not the exact language, is also found at Qumran in *Community Rule*, where proper conduct for the covenanters is outlined: “I will pay to no man the reward of evil; I will pursue him with goodness. For judgement of all the living is with God and it is He who will render to man his reward.”⁴⁴

This last statement about God’s judgment reflects general Old Testament theology. Isaiah had proclaimed, “The Lord is a God of judgment” (Isaiah 30:18). Jesus and his followers shared with the people of Qumran a belief in God’s absolute sovereignty and right to judge. However, a major difference between Jesus’s disciples and Qumran covenanters was that Jesus’s disciples believed their Master to be that God and Judge. According to Jesus’s own declarations, God the Father “committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22), and, therefore, the words which Jesus spoke “shall judge [humankind] in the last day” (John 12:48). Aside from this major difference, good works and deeds were very important in the teachings of both Jesus and the Qumran covenanters. And both spoke of the wicked as sons or men of perdition.⁴⁵ In Qumran texts as well as in the New Testament, “individuals were held responsible for their choices, the overarching plan of a sovereign God notwithstanding.”⁴⁶

41. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.135.

42. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.371.

43. Quoted in Schubert, “Sermon on the Mount and Qumran Texts,” 126.

44. *Community Rule* X, 17–18, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 113.

45. Compare *Community Rule* X, 19, with John 17:12.

46. Weston W. Fields, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Short History* (Boston: Brill, 2006), 90.

The Temple

Unlike the Qumran covenanters, Jesus and his disciples were not a closed body of initiates living in the wilderness, but engaged with the population at large. Yet, both groups regarded the temple as being of paramount importance, a place of supreme sanctity, a place set apart from the world. From start to finish the temple occupies a central place in the New Testament. The story of Jesus's life and ministry begins in the temple with the vision given to Zacharias, John's father (Luke 1:5–22). The book of Revelation ends with John's startling announcement that in the celestial city of Jerusalem he “saw no temple therein” (Revelation 21:22). This is noteworthy precisely because the temple had always played a major role, one way or another, in both Jerusalem's and Israel's history. But in the celestial world, says John, “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of [celestial Jerusalem]” (Revelation 21:22). During his mortal life, Jesus cleansed the temple twice.⁴⁷ He taught daily in the temple.⁴⁸ The great symbol of the end of the Mosaic dispensation, the end of the Aaronic order of the temple, the end of divinely sanctioned animal sacrifices, and thus the beginning of a new era, was the tearing of the veil of the temple into two pieces.⁴⁹ After his resurrection, Jesus commanded his apostles to stay in Jerusalem, at the temple, until they were endowed with power from on high—which they did (Luke 24:49, 53). Thus, the temple was of no small importance to Jesus and his followers.

The importance of the temple at Qumran is well known. Those who had formed the isolated desert community at Qumran did so because they believed that the Jerusalem temple's priesthood was corrupt, lax in ritual purity, and perpetuating a corrupted ritual calendar in the Holy City. Nevertheless, as the *Temple Scroll* indicates, the idea of a pure and undefiled temple in their midst remained their ideal. They awaited a restored temple at the end of time. In the meantime, they lived as though they were dwelling in the temple at all times,

47. See John 2:14 and Matthew 21:13.

48. See Matthew 26:55 and Luke 21:37.

49. Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; and Luke 23:45; see the discussion in Andrew C. Skinner, *Golgotha* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 168–70.

seeking to make their community a large, open-air, virtual temple.⁵⁰ They wore white linen garments to symbolize the level of temple-like purity they sought to attain.⁵¹ They referred to the area where they ate their sacred meals as a holy temple. In fact, the covenanters believed they themselves constituted a temple, with “Israel” (the laymen of the community) as the holy place, and “Aaron” (the priests of the community) as the Holy of Holies.⁵²

When such men as these come to be in Israel, then shall the party of the *Yahad* truly be established, an “eternal planting” (*Jub.* 16:26), a temple for Israel, and—mystery!—a Holy of Holies for Aaron; true witnesses to justice, chosen by God’s will to atone for the land and to recompense the wicked their due. They will be “the tested wall, the precious cornerstone” (*Isa.* 28:16) whose foundations shall neither be shaken nor swayed, a fortress, a Holy of Holies for Aaron, all of them knowing the Covenant of Justice and thereby offering a sweet savor. They shall be a blameless and true house in Israel, upholding the covenant of eternal statutes. They shall be an acceptable sacrifice, atoning for the land and ringing in the verdict against evil, so that perversity ceases to exist.⁵³

Such unusual symbolism parallels the very view expressed by the apostle Paul to the Corinthian saints: “Know ye [Greek plural] not that ye [Greek plural] are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:16–17). Paul is not saying here that each individual member is a repository of the Holy Spirit, although he does mean that very thing in a latter passage (see 1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Rather, like the Qumranites, the group collectively is a sacred entity, and they are to live as though they

50. S. Kent Brown, “The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Mormon Perspective,” *BYU Studies* 23/1 (1983): 57–58.

51. Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 2.126–32.

52. VanderKam and Flint, *Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 376.

53. 1QS VIII, 4–10, quoted in VanderKam and Flint, *Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 376.

were continuously dwelling in sacred space. The theme is continued in 2 Corinthians 6:16–17 wherein Paul restates, “for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them,” just as he walks in holy buildings called temples. Furthermore, he says, “come out from among them [unbelievers], and be ye separate”—just as a temple edifice is dedicated and set apart.

When looking at temple-related teachings at Qumran and in early Christianity, we are reminded again that both Jesus and Paul knew Qumran theology. It sprang from the same environment as their theology. Jesus and Paul sometimes used some of the same concepts, and even language, to teach the tenets of their own message.

One of the foundational documents at Qumran was the *Temple Scroll*. Found in Cave 11 in 1956 (though it did not come to light until 1967), the *Temple Scroll* is the longest of the Dead Sea Scrolls—more than 8½ meters (over 28 feet). It is an authoritative reinterpretation of the Torah. It casts the words of God spoken to Moses in the first person (“I say to you”), rather than the third-person form found in the Pentateuch (“the Lord said”).⁵⁴ The *Temple Scroll* not only described the future eschatological temple to be built, but also prescribed acceptable rituals, standards of behavior, and the nature of the true covenant with God at Qumran, all of which were to replace the defiled edifice and impure practices which then existed in Jerusalem.

The *Temple Scroll* links the future temple to the covenant God made with Jacob at Bethel. In one passage God says: “And I will consecrate my Temple by my glory, [the Temple] on which I will settle my glory, until the day of the blessing [or, the day of creation] on which I will create my Temple and establish it for myself for all times, according to the covenant which I have made with Jacob at Bethel.”⁵⁵

Elder Marion G. Romney of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles indicated that the events at Bethel amounted to Jacob’s endowment experience, and said ultimately, “Temples are to us all what Bethel was

54. VanderKam and Flint, *Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 211.

55. As cited in Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll: The Hidden Law of the Dead Sea Sect* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1985), 113.

to Jacob.”⁵⁶ We do not know if the Qumran covenanters had any conception of an endowment-like ordinance. We do know that the endowment existed during at least part of this period in the early church. President Heber C. Kimball taught that the temple endowment administered in the Church of Jesus Christ today is the same that was found in the ancient church and that Jesus “inducted his Apostles into these ordinances.”⁵⁷ The church historian Eusebius also indicated that Jesus taught the mysteries to the Apostles and the Seventy. Apocryphal sources suggest that Jesus’s forty-day ministry witnessed the establishment of a special, sacred ritual among the disciples.⁵⁸ Luke may be hinting at this when he mentions the Lord’s forty-day, post-resurrection ministry among the disciples as the time when he taught them “by many infallible proofs . . . and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). The phrase “infallible proofs” was translated by King James scholars from the Greek, *tekmēriois*, which literally means “sure signs or tokens.” Jesus taught his disciple-leaders about “the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” using many sure signs or tokens.

The *Temple Scroll* also sheds light on a key event in Christian history and theology—the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In the ancient world, a cross usually consisted of two parts, an upright pole (Latin, *stipes*) or stake (Greek, *stauros*) with a transverse beam or crossbar attached (Latin, *patibulum*). Written sources indicate that “the condemned [party] never carried the complete cross. . . . Instead only the crossbar was carried, to the place [where] the upright piece was set in the ground.”⁵⁹

56. Marion G. Romney, “Temples—The Gates to Heaven,” *Ensign*, March 1971, 16.

57. *Journal of Discourses* 10:240–41.

58. See Hugh W. Nibley, “Evangelium quadraginta dierum,” *Vigiliae christianae* 20 (1966): 1–24; reprinted under the title “Evangelium quadraginta dierum: The Forty-Day Mission of Christ—The Forgotten Heritage,” in *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987), 10–44; and Hugh W. Nibley, “The Early Christian Prayer Circle,” *BYU Studies* 19/1 (1978): 41–78, reprinted in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 45–99; and *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 19/2 (2010): 64–95.

59. Joe Zias and Eliezer Sekeles, “The Crucified Man from Giv‘at ha-Mivtar—A Reappraisal,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 48/3 (September 1985): 190.

The weight of biblical evidence infers that the upright piece to which Jesus's *patibulum* was fastened was a tree, whose branches may have been trimmed off. The gospel writers uniformly referred to Jesus's cross as simply *stauros*, literally "stake." However, the apostle Paul says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13). He was quoting Deuteronomy 21:23, which ultimately may be viewed as a prophetic reference to Christ's crucifixion. The apostle Peter speaks of the crucifixion of Jesus, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on a tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). To Cornelius and his family Peter bore a powerful testimony of Jesus as Messiah: "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree" (Acts 10:39).

Crucifixion on a "tree" is also described in the *Temple Scroll* as punishment for special offenses against the true community of Israel.

If a man slanders his people and delivers his people to a foreign nation and does evil to his people, you shall hang him on a tree and he shall die. On the testimony of two witnesses and on the testimony of three witnesses he shall be put to death and they shall hang him on the tree. If a man is guilty of a capital crime and flees (abroad) to the nations, and curses his people, the children of Israel, you shall hang him also on the tree, and he shall die. But his body shall not stay overnight on the tree. Indeed you shall bury him on the same day. For he who is hanged on the tree is accursed of God and men. You shall not pollute the ground which I give you to inherit.⁶⁰

From the foregoing evidence it may be inferred that the use of trees in the process of crucifixion in Judea was not an anomaly. We also see some of the crimes for which someone could be crucified among at least one group of Jews living in the Holy Land in Jesus's era. The text also confirms that crucifixion was more than an exclusively

60. 11Q Temple LXIV, 6–13, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 218.

Roman form of punishment in the first centuries BC–AD. Another text, the *Nahum Peshet* from Cave 4, refers to the furious young lion who “hangs men up alive” and to “a man hanged alive on [the] tree.”⁶¹ This action is ascribed to Alexander Jannaeus’s crucifixion of 800 Jewish rebels, most of whom were Pharisees.⁶²

Structure and Practices

It is sometimes pointed out that the Qumran community at some point functioned under the direction of a council composed of twelve men and three priests. No distinctive name designates this group; it is usually referred to simply as the council of the community. The *Community Rule* briefly outlines the organization:

In the Council of the Community there shall be twelve men and three Priests, perfectly versed in all that is revealed of the Law, whose works shall be truth, righteousness, justice, loving-kindness and humility. They shall preserve the faith in the Land with steadfastness and meekness and shall atone for sin by the practice of justice and by suffering the sorrows of affliction. They shall walk with all men according to the standard of truth and the rule of the time.

When these are in Israel, the Council of the Community shall be established in truth. It shall be an Everlasting Plantation, a House of Holiness for Israel, an Assembly of Supreme Holiness for Aaron. They shall be witnesses to the truth at the Judgement.⁶³

The Council of the Twelve Apostles immediately comes to mind as the early Christian analog. The Twelve chosen by Jesus were also commissioned to be “witnesses,” not just of the “truth at the

61. 4QpNah (4Q169) I, 6–7, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 505.

62. Joe Zias and James H. Charlesworth, “Crucifixion: Archaeology, Jesus, and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 277–78.

63. *Community Rule* VIII, 1–5, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 108–9.

Judgment,” but more importantly, of his resurrection.⁶⁴ They were also to teach, set in order church affairs, and administer the ordinances of the gospel.⁶⁵ Though not a separate group as at Qumran, during Jesus’s ministry an inner circle of three, from among the Twelve, were singled out and given special training. These three functioned as the First Presidency of the early church.⁶⁶ Beyond this comparison, however, the organizational picture at Qumran is unclear. The *Damascus Document* speaks of “the Priest,” who was apparently above the other priests at Qumran,⁶⁷ and the *War Scroll* mentions the “chief priest and his second,” and after them the twelve “Chiefs of the priests.”⁶⁸ There is also the “Guardian of all the camps,”⁶⁹ as well as special judges.⁷⁰ This Guardian, translated from the Hebrew *mebaqqer*, had a special supervisory role in the community and may be the equivalent of *episkopos* (Greek bishop/overseer), mentioned several times in the New Testament (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:7).⁷¹

Perhaps the most instructive point to be made is that the importance of the twelve tribes of Israel seems to underlie the idea of having twelve leaders in both the Christian and Qumran communities.

In Qumran the chiefs of the tribes are expressly mentioned in connection with the convocation of the Assembly (1QSa 1:28–29). Twelve chiefs of the Levites are mentioned, “one per tribe” (1QM 2:2–3). Likewise, Jesus definitely associated the twelve apostolic offices with the twelve tribes (Matt. 19:28; cf. Luke 22:30, clearly an independent tradition). In the Book of Revelation, the Twelve Tribes and the Twelve Apostles are joined in the imagery of the Holy City (Rev. 21:12–14).⁷²

64. See Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 4:20; 5:32, etc.

65. See Matthew 28:18–20 and Acts 6:1–6.

66. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 571.

67. CD XIV, 6–8, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 145.

68. 1QM II, 1–2; Vermes translates the phrases as “High Priest and his vicar,” and “the twelve chief priests,” in *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 166.

69. CD XIV, 9, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 145.

70. See the discussion in William Sanford LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 54–58, 159–62.

71. VanderKam, “Scrolls and Early Christianity,” 68.

72. LaSor, *Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, 161.

A distinctive practice found at Qumran has a close parallel in the early church: the sharing of property among those who become members of the community. As Luke attests:

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. . . . Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. (Acts 4:32, 34–35)

The *Community Rule* makes reference to the merging of a new member's property. When a candidate has completed one year in the process of admission to the community, and if he is destined to remain, "his property and earnings shall be handed over to the Bursar of the Congregation."⁷³ After an additional year of probation, if he passes the review of the congregation to enter the community, "then he shall be inscribed among his brethren in the order of his rank for the Law, and for justice, and for the pure Meal; his property shall be merged and he shall offer his counsel and judgement to the Community."⁷⁴ Thus, when fully initiated, the community member gave all his possessions to the communal order.

Jesus gave instruction at times advocating a similar behavior: "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? . . . Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me" (Mark 10:17, 21). Other religious communities embraced the social and economic order of having all things in common; Enoch's was one (Moses 7:18), Nephi's was another (4 Nephi 1:3), the Church of Jesus Christ in this

73. *Community Rule* VI, 19–20, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 106.

74. *Community Rule* VI, 22, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 106–7.

dispensation was yet one more (D&C 82:17–21). All these are manifestations of the implementation of the law of the celestial kingdom on earth (D&C 105:3–5).

Both the early church and the Qumran community imposed penalties for lying about (secretly withholding) personal property from their respective communities. The penalty at Qumran was much less severe than in the early church. From the *Community Rule* we read, “If one of them has lied deliberately in matters of property, he shall be excluded from the pure Meal of the Congregation for one year and shall do penance with respect to one quarter of his food.”⁷⁵ In contrast, Acts 5:1–11 reports the case of Ananias and Sapphira, husband and wife, who “sold a possession” but “kept back part of the price . . . and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 5:1–2).

For openly lying to Peter and to God, both died. Latter-day revelation helps to explain the severity of Ananias’s and Sapphira’s punishment as the breaking of a higher law and covenant, instituted by God to ensure economic equality, to help every man seek the interest of his neighbor and do all things with an eye single to the glory of God. For, said the Lord, “This order I have appointed to be an everlasting order. . . . And the soul that sins against this covenant, and hardeneth his heart against it, shall be dealt with according to the laws of my church, and shall be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption” (D&C 82:17–21, especially 20–21). Presumably it is this covenant, instituted in many dispensations, that Ananias and Sapphira willfully broke.

In terms of ritual eating, a “sacred meal with eschatological significance also seems to be something that the Qumran covenanters and the early Christians shared.”⁷⁶ During the Jewish Passover (or seder) meal, bread and wine play a special role. Jesus changed the Passover into the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, emphasizing the symbolic significance of the bread and wine: “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks,

75. *Community Rule* VI, 25, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 107.

76. VanderKam, “Scrolls and Early Christianity,” 74.

and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:26–29).⁷⁷

Certain Qumran texts describe a special religious meal involving bread and wine as central elements, different from the regular meals of the community. Of the latter, the *Community Rule* states: "And when the table has been prepared for eating, and the new wine for drinking, the Priest shall be the first to stretch out his hand to bless the firstfruits of the bread and new wine."⁷⁸ According to Professor James VanderKam, this regular meal is not the same as "the pure Meal" mentioned later in the same text. The "pure Meal" is also described in a separate text called the *Rule of the Congregation* (VanderKam's designation), or the *Messianic Rule* (Vermes's designation).⁷⁹ VanderKam's translation reads:

The session of the men of renown, invited to the feast for the council of the community when at the end (of days) the messiah shall assemble with them. The priest shall enter at the head of all the congregation of Israel, and all his brethren the sons of Aaron, the priests, who are invited to the feast, the men of renown, and they shall sit before him, each according to his importance. Afterwards the messiah of Israel shall enter and the heads of the thousands of Israel shall sit before him each according to his importance, according to his station in their encampments and their journeys. And all of the heads of the households of the congregation, their sages and wise men, shall sit before them, each according to his importance. When they meet at the communal table, to set out bread and wine, and the communal table is arranged to eat and to drink wine no one shall extend his hand to the first (portion) of the bread and the wine before the priest. For he shall bless the

77. See Mark 14:22–25 and Luke 22:17–20.

78. *Community Rule* VI, 4–6, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 105.

79. Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 159.

first (portion) of the bread and the wine and shall extend his hand to the bread first. Afterwards, the messiah of Israel shall extend his hands to the bread. Afterwards, all of the congregation of the community shall bless, each according to his importance. They shall act according to this statute whenever (the meal) is arranged when as many as ten meet together.⁸⁰

This meal at Qumran, with its messianic quality or aura, its use of bread and wine, and its eschatological associations, clearly reminds one of the sacrament instituted by the true and living Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, before his suffering. Latter-day Saints await the fulfillment of the future sacramental banquet promised by Jesus when he was in the Upper Room (Matthew 26:29), which will involve prophets and patriarchs from former dispensations, and “all those whom my Father hath given me out of the world,” as described in a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith (D&C 27:5–14).

The Messiah

The last idea that must be mentioned in our brief survey is the concept of a messiah—so central to both the Qumran and early Christian communities. Both communities possessed an eschatological outlook—the belief that the last days and end of the present world were coming soon. Both communities expected that the end of time would be ushered in by messianic figures. The age of Jesus and Qumran was a period of intense messianic fervor—in Galilee, Jerusalem, and the Judean desert. However, the two groups had different messianic expectations.

Qumran covenanters believed the last days would bring two messiahs: the messiah of Aaron, or priestly messiah, and the messiah of Israel, a lower-ranking lay messiah. From the *Community Rule* we read: “They [the men of holiness] shall depart from none of the counsels of the Law to walk in all the stubbornness of their hearts, but shall be ruled by the primitive precepts in which the men of the

80. Quoted in VanderKam, “Scrolls and Early Christianity,” 74–75; brackets and lacunae have been omitted for readability.

Community were first instructed until there shall come the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel.⁸¹

The two messiahs would be preceded by a prophet forerunner, but other than presiding over the messianic banquet, it is not clear what the function of the messiahs would be. No text from Qumran speaks of an anointed one who would atone for the sins of others.⁸² This fits with the general world of Jewish belief wherein there is no recognized need for an external redeemer to remove sin, to reconcile to God, and to restore holiness to the people.

On the other hand, the Christian messiah, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, is almost entirely about a vicarious redeemer, a substitute who suffers for the sins of others (2 Corinthians 5:21). Furthermore, the Christian messiah, who comes at the end of times, is the same person who was here on earth before, who was born as the Son of God, performed a ministry of miracles, healed the sick, raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cleansed lepers, suffered for the sins of others, was crucified and resurrected, and who will return to earth as God to begin his millennial reign.⁸³ This is quite a different messiah than the ones anticipated at Qumran. But even here we are not without a precedent among the scrolls. One of the most important non-biblical texts at Qumran for understanding Jesus and his ministry was found in Cave 4—the *Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521). It reads in part:

the heavens and the earth will listen to His Messiah, and none therein will stray from the commandments of the holy ones [saints]. . . . Over the poor [humble] His spirit will hover and will renew the faithful with His power. And He will glorify the pious on the throne of the eternal Kingdom. He who liberates the captives, restores sight to the blind, straightens the bent [or lifts up those who are oppressed]. . . . For He will heal the wounded, and revive [raise] the dead and bring good

81. *Community Rule IX*, 9–11, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 110.

82. So says VanderKam, “Scrolls and Early Christianity,” 76.

83. Matthew 16:27; 1 Corinthians 15:20–23; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 19:11–16; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:1–55.

news to the poor. . . . He will lead the uprooted and make the hungry rich.⁸⁴

Believed to have been copied in the first century BC, this document contains some arresting similarities to Isaiah 61:1–2, as read by Jesus in the Nazareth synagogue:

And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. (Luke 4:17–21)

The *Messianic Apocalypse* also presents a list of characteristics or activities that were expected to accompany the figure it describes. Luke 4:16–21 (which contains portions of Isaiah 61:1–2 and Isaiah 58:6) reveals some common elements: the bringing of good news (the definition of “gospel”) to the poor, the giving of sight to the blind, release to the captives, and freedom to the oppressed. Those other features found in 4Q521 not mentioned in Luke 4:16–21 are found in Luke 7:20–22 (Matthew 11:4–5).

Thus there is a remarkable correspondence in form and content between certain New Testament passages⁸⁵ that describe the characteristics of the Messiah as prophesied in the Old Testament, and messianic characteristics listed in the *Messianic Apocalypse*, composed years before the synoptic gospels. Did the synoptic authors copy from 4Q521? Did they borrow from a common fund of knowledge, well

84. 4Q521 II, 1–13, in Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 412–13. I have supplied alternate translations in brackets.

85. See Luke 4:16–21; 7:21–22, and Matthew 11:4–5.

known in that age of messianic expectation and fervor? Or, are these questions not so important for our understanding of Jesus and his world as the issue raised by Craig Evans, namely, that “4Q521 significantly supports the traditional view that Jesus did indeed see himself as Israel’s Messiah,” thus putting to rest the errant views of scholars who claim that Jesus did not know who he was or did not see or proclaim himself to be God’s Anointed One.⁸⁶

If 4Q521 was a well-known text at the time, it could further help to explain why there was such astonishment and then anger at Jesus’s recitation of scripture in his hometown synagogue. He was not only declaring himself to be the fulfillment of prophetic expectation, he would also have been seen as a messenger of the Essenes.

One other Qumran fragment illuminates a portion of Luke’s gospel. Found in Cave 4, and written in Aramaic, it has been named the *Apocryphon of Daniel*, though it is sometimes referred to as the *Son of God Scroll* (4Q246) because it contains the phrases “Son of the Most High” and “Son of God.” This immediately recalls the account of annunciation in Luke 1:30–35:

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

The Qumran text reads, in part:

86. Craig A. Evans, quoted in VanderKam and Flint, *Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 334.

[. . .] will be called great, and be designated by his name 'Son of God' he shall be called, and they will name him 'Son of the Most High.' . . . His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and all his ways truth. He will judge the earth with truth and all will make peace. The sword will cease from the earth, and all cities will pay him homage. The great God will be his strength. . . . His sovereignty is everlasting sovereignty and all the depths of the earth are His.⁸⁷

There is debate among scholars regarding who is being referred to in this text. Opinions vary widely, from Alexander Balas, to the Antichrist, to Melchizedek or Michael. However, such scholars as Émile Puech and John Collins understand the name-titles in the text to be references "to a messianic figure at the end times."⁸⁸ What does this mean for our study of the New Testament? As VanderKam explains, the language of 4Q246 does not mean Jesus is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. "It does indicate, however, that some sectarian Jews were already using the title 'son of God' to refer to an exalted messiah to come."⁸⁹

Conclusion

The Dead Sea Scrolls are invaluable for many reasons, not the least of which is they illuminate the Jewish world in the age of Jesus. They provide the earliest extant copies of the Hebrew Bible, one thousand years older than previous "earliest copies." They are of great worth to Old Testament textual critics. They show that sometimes two or three versions of the same biblical book existed side by side in the time of Jesus. Thus, not only have the scrolls "opened a window on the extraordinary pluralism of early Judaism,"⁹⁰ but they have opened a window on the extraordinary textual pluralism of the age of Jesus.

87. 4Q246 I, 9–II, 10; translation taken and adapted from John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 155.

88. VanderKam and Flint, *Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 335.

89. VanderKam, "Scrolls and Early Christianity," 75.

90. Chilton, "Jesus, A Galilean Rabbi," 156.

According to the scrolls themselves, the community of covenanters was established by the Teacher of Righteousness, who revealed the true interpretation of scripture. Some scholars and writers have asserted that not only do the scrolls portray the Teacher of Righteousness “as a slain and resurrected Messiah, but even that he and Jesus were the same person.”⁹¹ However, such cannot be the case (most of the scrolls predate the first century AD). We have seen, though, that many concepts and expressions in the gospels and writings of Paul have parallels in the Dead Sea Scrolls that illuminate the teachings and texts of the New Testament and clearly demonstrate the Jewish roots of both the early church and the Qumran community. As VanderKam stated, “the Christians who wrote the Gospels drew on imagery and language from earlier Jewish messianic literature.”⁹² Qumran and the early church constitute two distinctive developments within intertestamental Judaism that drew upon a “common intellectual and theological background.”⁹³

This should not surprise Latter-day Saints for several reasons. First of all, God’s Son came to earth at a time of great messianic anticipation. Matthew captures some of this feeling when he reports that crowds followed Jesus at his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And . . . all the city was moved” (Matthew 21:9–10). Both the Qumran community and the early church possessed this eschatological outlook. Both communities “are rooted in Jewish apocalypticism and therefore share a common legacy of ideas.”⁹⁴ Thus, both the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament “utilize apocalypticism to tell the story of Israel, which unfolds in the topics of sin, exile and restoration, though each set of documents tells the story from its respective point of view.”⁹⁵

91. J. R. Porter, *Jesus Christ: The Jesus of History, the Christ of Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 37.

92. VanderKam, “Scrolls and Early Christianity,” 75.

93. Porter, *Jesus Christ*, 37.

94. Pate, *Communities of the Last Days*, 18.

95. Pate, *Communities of the Last Days*, 18.

The word *apocalypticism* derives from the Greek *apocalypse*, which means an “uncovering” or “revelation” about the future. Like eschatology, apocalypticism centers on events leading up to a future age. “Apocalypticism was at a fever pitch during the period of the DSS [Dead Sea Scrolls] and the NT [New Testament]. Many Jews firmly believed that the age to come, or the kingdom of God, was poised to descend to earth from heaven.”⁹⁶ Jewish apocalypticism was made up of some fundamental components: the belief that certain extraordinary events would precede the coming of the kingdom of God, including apostasy, great tribulation, and the arrival of the messiah(s); judgment of the wicked, and cosmic renewal or a new creation. Both the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament corpus contain works that are explicitly apocalyptic in nature: the *War Scroll* and the *Community Rule* among the scrolls, and the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24), 2 Thessalonians, and the book of Revelation, also known as the Apocalypse of John in the New Testament.⁹⁷ To reiterate, both the Qumran community and the early church were greatly impacted by apocalypticism.

Second, the gospel of Jesus Christ is eternal. It was first revealed to Adam, including the doctrine that Jesus would come in the meridian of time (Moses 5:57–58). Ideas and doctrines first revealed to Adam and Eve filtered down through the generations. In addition, many Old Testament prophecies pointed to that first coming of God in the flesh; all the prophets foretold it.⁹⁸ It is only natural that messianic ideas, prophetically foretold aspects, and actual sayings of the Messiah’s mortal ministry would become part of the theology of two groups, Qumran and the Church of Jesus Christ, both of which anticipated divine favor.

Third, both Qumran and the early church were restorationist groups. They sought to reestablish and renew things that had been lost over the centuries through wickedness and carelessness. We know that Jesus was, in fact, the Elias of restoration in his day (John 1:26–28 JST). Qumran saw itself as the “Community of the Renewed [or

96. Pate, *Communities of the Last Days*, 237 n. 4.

97. Pate, *Communities of the Last Days*, 238 n. 4.

98. See Jacob 4:4; Mosiah 13:33; and Luke 24:27.

restored] Covenant.” They saw their own roots stretching all the way back to Adam. As Professor Shemaryahu Talmon has said,

They view[ed] their community as the youngest link in a chain of sequential reaffirmations of the covenant, to which the Bible gives witness (CD II, 14–III, 20). God had originally established his covenant with Adam. He renewed it after each critical juncture in the history of the world, and of Israel; after the flood, with Noah, the “second Adam”; then with the patriarchs; again with all Israel at Sinai; with the priestly house of Aaron; and ensuingly with the royal house of David, after the monarchical system had taken root in Israel. In the present generation . . . “he raised for himself” from among all the evildoers “men called by name, that a remnant be left in the land, and that the earth be filled with their offspring” (CD II, 11–12). The thread of Israel’s historical past, which snapped when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, is retied with the foundation of the *yahad*’s “renewed covenant.”⁹⁹

Thus, the influence of the holy spirit, reverence for prophets, belief in divine revelation, the faith and action necessary to reacquire lost truths, practices, and purity—all these were emphasized among early Christians and Qumran covenanters. By contrast, as Talmon points out, rabbinic Judaism, which developed alongside these other two branches of Judaism, progressively moved away from prophets, ongoing revelation, and “the spirit,” and developed a rationalist stance. According to rabbinic tradition, after the demise of the last biblical prophets—Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi—“the holy spirit departed from Israel,” and from then on Israel was enjoined to incline her ear and “listen to the instructions of the [rabbinic] Sages.”¹⁰⁰

What a different picture is portrayed in the scrolls and the New Testament. The Qumran community saw in the proclamations of

99. Shemaryahu Talmon, *The “Dead Sea Scrolls” or “The Community of the Renewed Covenant”* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 17–18.

100. Quotations are from *M Sotah* 48b, *Sanhedrin* 11a, and *Seder ‘Olam Rabbah* 6, as cited in Talmon, “*Dead Sea Scrolls*,” 16.

the prophets “an implied promise of restoration, and claim[ed] this promise for themselves.”¹⁰¹ So did the early Christians. The Qumran community saw itself “as the sole legitimate representative of biblical Israel.”¹⁰² So did the early Christians. Jesus, Stephen, Apollos, and others referenced the biblical history of Israel as implicit and explicit evidence that their movement was the fulfillment of prophetic anticipation (see Matthew 13:17; Luke 10:24; Acts 7; 18:28). The Qumran covenanters were attempting to restore what had been lost or corrupted. So were Jesus and his disciples.

However, after AD 70 only one restoration group survived (though it too changed again through apostasy). But the other has come back to life through their treasury of documents now known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. By examining these documents, we are given an extraordinary window into the religious climate that spawned Christianity, normative or Pharisaic Judaism, as well as the Qumran community. But perhaps the most exciting thing about the Dead Sea Scrolls is that continual study of their varied and various texts, alongside the New Testament, will yield insights that will illuminate the world of Jesus for a long time to come. And, of course, as Latter-day Saints compare and contrast their own ideas and practices with those described in the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as the New Testament, they will see with greater clarity how concepts found in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are perfectly at home in that ancient cultural milieu that had not yet been discovered in the nineteenth century.

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101. Talmon, “Dead Sea Scrolls,” 17.

102. Talmon, “Dead Sea Scrolls,” 15.