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The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christianity



Written by Robert C. Jones
Acworth, Georgia

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Christian Theology and History Adult Sunday School Courses

Robert Jones

www.sundayschoolcourses.com

I've always been a strong believer in adult Sunday School classes and Bible studies in our churches. And many churches have quality, Biblically-based adult-focused programs. Unfortunately, just as many churches tend to downplay adult education, focusing on children's education (not a bad thing in itself), or focusing on the needs of the "unchurched", where topics such as church history and theology are often purposely ignored.

Yet there is a strong need for adult education focused on both the Bible and the basic tenets and history of the Faith. Among the reasons:

- Not all adults come from a strong childhood background in the church – adult Sunday School classes/Bible studies may be their first serious introduction to what Christianity is all about
- Christianity (and especially Evangelical Christianity) is under constant attack from the media and popular culture (movies, music, etc.). We need to give fellow Christians the tools to defend the Faith against attack (or to provide a "ready defense" as Peter says in 1 Peter 3:15)
- Even adult Christians that have a strong Biblical background often know little about the origins and history of their Faith

To better meet the needs of adult Christians (both those mature in their Faith, and those just starting out in the "School of Christ"), I've written a series of courses that focus on the history of the Christian Church (including the Jewish roots), as well as the development of doctrine in the Church. The topics represented in these courses are intended to both further the participant's walk in the Faith, as well as serve as a starting point for Christian apologetics.

While the primary purpose of these courses is for use in churches, they also may be useful for High School and College projects, especially the courses focused primarily on historical aspects.

One note: these courses are primarily written from an Evangelical Protestant viewpoint (I come from a Reformed Church background), but I hope I've given ample time to other points of view throughout the various courses.

Front Cover: The Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem, modern home of the Dead Sea Scrolls (photo by Barbara Brim)

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Table of Contents

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND HISTORY ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL COURSES.....	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	4
INTRODUCTION	5
DISCOVERY OF THE SCROLLS.....	6
ABOUT THE SCROLLS THEMSELVES	7
ISAIAH (ST. MARKS).....	9
THANKSGIVING PSALMS	9
MANUAL OF DISCIPLINE	10
DAMASCUS DOCUMENT.....	10
COMMENTARY ON HABAKKUK.....	11
COPPER SCROLL.....	11
MMT – MIQSAT MA’ASEH HA-TORAH.....	12
WAR SCROLL – SCROLL OF THE WAR OF THE SONS OF LIGHT AGAINST THE SONS OF DARKNESS	13
THE TEACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.....	14
THE SCROLL PUBLISHING DEBATES	16
THE SECTARIANS.....	17
THE ESSENES.....	19
SADDUCEES	21
QUMRAN	22
THE SCROLLS & CHRISTIANITY.....	24
MESSIANIC COMPARISONS.....	26
OTHER THEOLOGICAL SIMILARITIES	27
A GOSPEL AMONG THE SCROLLS?.....	28
SUMMARY.....	28
TIMELINE	28
SOURCES.....	32

Introduction

Manual of Discipline: “And this is the order for the men of the community who have offered themselves to turn from all evil and to lay hold of all that he commanded according to his will, to be separated from the congregation of the men of error, to become a community in law and in wealth, answering when asked by the sons of Zadok, the priests who keep the covenant...” (Millar Burrows translation, p. 376)

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (parts of 800 manuscripts found in 11 caves) near Qumran on the Dead Sea is the archaeological find of the 20th century (photo to right: Library of Congress LC-DIG-matpc-13012). Fifty years after the initial discovery, all of the scrolls have been published, but the controversies around the scrolls have not abated. Among the questions still blazing:



- Was the site (Qumran), located below the scroll caves, connected with the scrolls?
- Was Qumran an Essene monastery or a Jewish fortress? A fortified farm, or a *villa rustica* for wealthy vacationers?
- Are the scrolls the private library of an offbeat Jewish sect (perhaps the Essenes), or are they the library of the Temple of Jerusalem, taken to the caves of the Dead Sea for safekeeping during the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.?
- Do the scrolls undermine Christianity, or simply add greater context to our understanding of the Jewish roots of Christianity?
- Is the fabulous treasure described in the Copper Scroll real? If so, is it still “out there” in the Judean desert, waiting to be found?

In addition to the theological and archaeological arguments above, other controversies regarding the scrolls have arisen, including:

- The modern story of the scrolls has played out against a background of two wars (the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars). An armed Israeli force captured the Palestine Archaeological Museum (which housed the Cave 4 scrolls) during the 1967 Six Day War.
- Prior to the (unauthorized) publication of the scrolls in 1991 (see below), more than 50% of the Cave 4 scrolls had not yet been made available to the public or to scholars. This had led some to question whether the scrolls were being kept from publication because they contained controversial material. (In 1991, both *Biblical Archaeology Review* and the Huntington Library published the scrolls in their entirety, against a background of threatened lawsuits from the official scroll publication team.)
- The Chief Scroll Editor John Strugnell resigned in 1990 after making seeming anti-Semitic comments in an interview with an Israeli journalist

The controversies swirl on, but in the meantime, we have the scrolls themselves to ponder and to study.

This booklet will present a brief survey of current scroll scholarship, and discuss what the scrolls can tell us about the Jewish roots of Christianity in the inter-Testamental period.

Discovery of the Scrolls

Even though the scrolls were initially found just over 50 years ago (well within the living memory of many people), the story of how they were found, and how they came to be in the hands of scholars is hardly clear-cut. The lack of clarity is understandable, though, when one considers that most of the scrolls were discovered by Bedouins in, how should we put it, “unauthorized” archaeological expeditions.

In (perhaps) the most common version, the initial scroll discovery occurred in February or March of 1947 when a Bedouin named Muhammad Ahmad el-Hamned (on right in the photo) stumbled upon what is now known as “Cave 1” when searching for some lost sheep. In the cave were 7 (or 8, in some versions) almost intact scrolls found in earthenware jars.



Continuing with the most common version, in April 1947, the Bedouin(s) brought the scrolls to Bethlehem, and offered them for sale to two antiquities dealers. Eventually three scrolls were purchased by Faidi Salahi (it is said, for \$14) and four by the mysterious Khalil Iskander Shahin (a.k.a. Kando). From this point, the story becomes a bit clearer.



View of some of the caves above Qumran (Photo by Barbara Brim)

Between April of 1947 and early 1948, the two antiquities dealers sold their respective scrolls to scholars. Kando sold his four scrolls to the Syrian Orthodox archbishop of Jerusalem, Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel (at the Syrian Orthodox Monastery of St. Mark). The scrolls (which reportedly sold for about \$100) included:

- Isaiah (complete version)
- Manuel of Discipline
- Commentary on Habbakuk
- Genesis Apocryphon

Salahi sold his three scrolls to Hebrew University archaeology professor Eleazer Lupa Sukenik in November of 1947. The three scrolls sold to Sukenik included:

- Thanksgiving Psalms
- War Scroll
- Isaiah

Mar Samuel took his four scrolls to the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem (where, in time, another famous player in the Scrolls saga would become involved – Millar Burrows). After the scrolls were photographed (starting Feb. 21, 1948), copies were sent to prominent Biblical archaeologist

William Foxwell Albright at Johns Hopkins University. The famous reply from Albright was quick to come:

“My heartiest congratulations on the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times!...I should prefer a date around 100 B.C.!...What an absolutely incredible find! And there can happily not be the slightest doubt in the world about the genuineness of the manuscript.” (William Fox Albright, Shanks, p. 18)

While there would be various attacks on the antiquity of the scrolls (Solomon Zeitlin of Dropsie College in Philadelphia argued that the Scrolls were medieval in origin, connected with the Jewish sect known as the Karaites), in time, most scholars would agree that the scrolls dated from about 250 B.C. to the fall of Jerusalem (70 A.D.)

Over the next several years, more scrolls were found in more caves (11 caves in all) – most notably in 1952 when fragments of Ezekiel, Psalms, Jubilees & unknown works were found in “Cave 3”, in addition to the enigmatic “Copper Scroll.” Also in 1952, fragments of over 500 manuscripts were found by Bedouins in “Cave 4”. It was the Cave 4 scrolls that would eventually generate the great Scroll controversies of the late-1980s/early-1990s. While the Cave 4 scrolls were translated and cataloged as far back as 1960, by 1985, only 50% had been published.

About the Scrolls Themselves

In all, parts of 800 manuscripts were discovered in 11 caves in the Qumran area. Fewer than twelve scrolls were discovered more or less intact – the other scrolls were in over 25,000 fragments! Two hundred of the scrolls were books of the Hebrew Bible, representing every book of the Old Testament except possibly Esther. Among the more bountifully represented of the Old Testament texts (most were not complete copies):

Psalms	39
Deuteronomy	36
Isaiah	22
Exodus	17
Genesis	15
Leviticus	13
Numbers	8

In addition to the “official” books of the Old Testament, versions of apocryphal works (not included in the Catholic or Protestant Bibles) were found – the Book of Jubilees, for example. Also, 20 fragmentary copies of the Book of Enoch (I) written in Aramaic were found (prior to this discovery, the only extant translation was Ethiopic).

What was intriguing (or perhaps frightening in some quarters) was the content of the other 600 scrolls – previously unknown Psalms, Old Testament commentaries (Isaiah, Hosea, Nahum, Habakkuk), apocalyptic writings, and a set of scrolls that seemed to define the laws of an unknown Jewish sect.

Most of the scrolls were written on goatskin or sheepskin. A few were on papyrus; one was on copper. Most were written in Hebrew (with about 25% in Aramaic), but 19 intriguing fragments found in “Cave 7” were written in Greek – the language of the early Christians.

Interestingly enough, the 20th century scroll discoveries were not the first recorded “finds” of scrolls in the area. In the 3rd century, Early Church Father Origen wrote of a finding of Biblical manuscripts in a jar near Jericho! In 800 A.D., Timotheus, the Nestorian patriarch of Seleucia wrote in a letter of a cache of books found 10 years earlier in a cave near Jericho. Some scholars believe that both references could have been to the Qumran scrolls.

So, where did the scrolls come from? Who wrote the scrolls? Why were they placed into caves near the Dead Sea? The answers to these questions are significant not just from a scholarly or archaeological perspective – they are equally (potentially) important from a theological perspective. Here are some of the theories (and the possible theological relevance):

- The scrolls were the library of an obscure sect of Essenes, who lived in a monastery at Qumran (the settlement below the caves). This was the initial view taken by many scholars in the 1940s and 1950s. If it is true (and it could still be the correct interpretation), then any diversion from accepted Christian or Jewish beliefs found in the scrolls could be passed off as being those of an obscure group of ascetics. John Romer (who believes in theory number 3 below), states:

“The attractive scenario of this golden monastery by a bright blue sea, filled with pious, scribbling monks at work on mountains of religious texts, appealed to many historians and the public alike and was quickly enshrined in several best-selling books. This had the great advantage of distancing the Dead Sea Scrolls’ texts from the contemporary schools of Jerusalem. Any deviation from orthodoxy in the scrolls could be put down to the oddity of the Essene order.” (Romer, p. 140)

- Noting that many of the scrolls are often carelessly written, Eleazer Lupa Sukenik viewed that the caves were used as a *genizah*. “*Genizah* in Hebrew refers to a storage area where holy books and other Hebrew writings are ‘hidden away’ after they are no longer usable, since discarding them would be an act of disrespect.” (*The Significance of the Scrolls*, Lawrence Schiffman, Bible Review, Oct. 1990). If this view of the scrolls is correct - that the Qumran caves are a sort of trash bin for discarded works - there is also no need to be concerned regarding any potential doctrinal peculiarities contained within.
- A third theory, held by John Romer, and Professor Norman Golb of the University of Chicago is that the scrolls were brought from Jerusalem to Qumran for safekeeping during the first Jewish Revolt (around 68-70 A.D.).

If this view is correct – that the Dead Sea Scrolls are the library of the very Temple of Jerusalem, then the Scrolls represent the mainstream of Jewish thought at the time of Christ. Deviations in the scrolls from *currently* accepted doctrine would not really be deviations, because they would be...the true source of Judaism! Clearly (if this theory is correct), this would have a strong theological impact.

In favor of this view is the fact that similar fragmentary texts (14) were found at Masada (35 miles South of Qumran), perhaps demonstrating that the style of texts was not limited to a small ascetic body at Qumran. Mitigating against this view is the aforementioned fact that many of the scrolls were sloppily written (thus, they couldn’t be sacred writings from the Temple), and the fact that none of the scrolls appear to be from the Pharisees or Sadducees.

Isaiah (St. Marks)

One of the first intact scrolls found in Cave 1 was the Isaiah scroll which eventually was brought to Mar Samuel at St. Mark's. The scroll itself is made of leather with strips sewed end to end. Its size is about 1 ft. x 24 ft. The Hebrew text is in 54 columns. Scholars date it to about 125 B.C. (at the time, the oldest part of the Hebrew Testament ever found).

Two points of special interest can be made about this scroll (and, indeed, the Hebrew Testament scrolls in general). First – even though this scroll predates the previously oldest complete version of the Hebrew Testament (Masoretic Text) by 1,000 years (the 10th century Aleppo Codex), there is remarkable similarity between the texts. This suggests that a thousand years of copying have not in any way significantly altered the meaning of the text.

The second point of interest is that, in some places where there is a difference from the 10th century A.D. Masoretic Text, the Dead Sea version agrees with the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Testament favored by the early Christians. This suggests that the Septuagint may be of equal validity to the Masoretic Text as a foundation for our modern Old Testament.

“Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, there are only seventeen letters in question. Ten of these letters are simply a matter of spelling, which does not affect the sense. Four more letters are minor stylistic changes, such as conjunctions. The remaining three letters comprise the word ‘light’, which is added in verse 11, and does not affect the meaning greatly. Furthermore, this word is supported by the LXX [Septuagint] and IQ Is. Thus, in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission – and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage.” (*Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell, p. 58)

Thanksgiving Psalms

The “Thanksgiving Psalms” came in 4 pieces, which, when assembled, comprised 12 columns, each about 13 inches high. The document is comprised of about twenty heretofore unknown Psalms. Some scholars have suggested that the Psalms were written by the enigmatic teacher of righteousness, mentioned in the Habakkuk Commentary, and the Damascus Document. And indeed, there are places in the text where it appears that the author is someone of special significance:

“Thou didst make me a banner for the righteous elect,
an interpreter of knowledge in wondrous mysteries.” (Burrows, p. 401)

The Psalms have a seeming apocalyptic flavor to them, especially describing the contrast between the “righteous elect”, the “army of the holy ones”, and the “congregation of the sons of heaven” against the “congregation of Belial” and the “interpreters of lies”. In several instances, there is language reminiscent of Revelation, such as:

“...for in the waves of death she gives birth to a man-child;
with pains of Sheol he bursts forth
from the crucible of the pregnant one,
a wonderful counselor with his power;
yes, a man comes forth from the waves...” (Burrows, p. 403)

“The foundations of the mountains are given to the flames;
the roots of flint become torrents of pitch.
It devours to the great abyss;

the torrents of Belial burst into Abaddon;
the sentient beings of the abyss roar
with the noise of the eruptions of mire.” (Burrows, p. 405)

One might also find a theology that would probably have been looked upon with favor by the Apostle Paul (and Martin Luther and John Calvin) – that man on his own is so perverse, that he is unworthy of salvation (see also section “The Scrolls and Christianity”):

“For I am a thing formed of clay, and kneaded with water,
the company of nakedness and source of uncleanness,
a furnace of iniquity and frame of sin,
a spirit of error and one perverted, without understanding,
and terrified by righteous judgements.” (Burrows, p. 400)

Manual of Discipline

The Manual of Discipline (also known as the “Rule of the Community”) was originally found in two pieces in Cave 1. When combined, it appears to be an almost complete document. It measures about 9.5” x 6’. Underscoring the potential significance of the document is the fact that ten additional (fragmentary) copies were found in Cave 4.

The curious title was given to the book by Millar Burrows, who, as director of the American School of Oriental Research in 1947, was one of the first to examine the scroll. Burrows thought that its “combination of liturgical directions with rules concerning procedure in the meetings of the group and the personal conduct of the members” reminded him of a similar book used in the Methodist Church, called the Manual of Discipline. (Burrows, p. 24)



The document contains the rules, or the “constitution” of a mysterious religious order (and yes, the term “order” is actually used in this 2,000 year old Jewish text!). It has been compared with the Christian *Didache* and *Apostolic Constitutions* of the 2nd-4th centuries.

The document appears to be in four parts, named by Burrows as “Entering the Covenant”, “Two Spirits in Man”, Rules of the Order”, and “The Closing Psalm”. We’ll examine some excerpts from this document in other sections of this study (“The Sectarrians”), but it is worth quoting from the “Entering the Covenant” section at the beginning:

“...the order of the community; to seek God...; to do what is good and upright before him as he commanded through Moses and through his servants the prophets...to love all the sons of light, each according to his lot in the counsel of God, and to hate all the sons of darkness, each according to his guilt in vengeance of God.” (Burrows, p. 371)

Damascus Document

The Damascus Document, so named because there are seven references to Damascus contained within, was first found in Cairo *genizah* in 1897 by Solomon Schechter of Cambridge. Like the Manual of Discipline, multiple copies of the document were found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (at least ten). Also like the Manual of Discipline, the document describes a series of statutes regarding a mysterious religious order, which may have called itself the “sons of Zadok”:

“The Sons of Zadok are the elect of Israel, those called by name, who will abide at the end of days.”
(Burrows, p. 352)

The document is in two parts. Part One is a “History/Exhortation”; Part Two is the statutes or laws. Intriguingly, the Damascus Document refers to many of the same characters described in the Habakkuk Commentary – The teacher of righteousness, the man of the lie, the preacher of the lie, etc. are all mentioned. Because of this similarity in characters, many people feel that the two must have been written by the same sect. The document also refers to “the decision of those who entered the new covenant in the land of Damascus”, which could possibly refer to the foundation of the sect.

We’ll examine some excerpts from this document in later sections.

Commentary on Habakkuk

The Commentary on Habakkuk measures about 5.5” x 5 ft., and starts with Habakkuk 1:5. Interestingly enough, it is written in the style of many modern Bible Commentaries, quoting a verse, and then expounding on it. The commentary seems to connect the scripture with a series of contemporary figures of whom only titles are given. The figures include the teacher of righteousness (perhaps the founder of the Sectarians), the preacher of the lie, the man of the lie, and the wicked priest. We are also introduced to the mysterious “Kittim” (also referred to in the War Scroll). In the commentary on Habakkuk 1:17, the text states:

“This means the Kittim, who cause many to perish by the sword – youths, men, and old men; women and little children – and on the fruit of the womb have no mercy.” (Burrows, p. 367)

Many theories have been propounded as to the identity of the Kittim. The two most popular are 1) the Romans or 2) the Macedonians (or their successors, the Seleucids of Syria.)

We will examine the possible identities of teacher of righteousness and the wicked priest in a forthcoming section.

Copper scroll

Perhaps the most enigmatic of all of the 800 Dead Sea Scrolls is the Copper Scroll, so named because it was contained on two small rolls of copper sheeting, measuring about 12 inches high. The Scroll was found on a ledge at the back of Cave 3 in 1952. Professor H. Wright-Baker at Manchester College of Technology opened the scroll by cutting it into 23 sections with a saw.



The scroll attracted immediate worldwide interest because it appears to list the locations of a fabulous treasure - 64 locations in all. By some estimates, the gold described within would weigh between 58-174 tons, worth up to a billion dollars in today’s terms.

John Allegro, one of the original editors on the Cave 4-scroll team, conducted a search for the treasure sites in 1959/60. No treasure was found, but this is understandable because the descriptions of the 64 sites are quite enigmatic:

“By the mouth of the water outlet of the drain pipe, buried three cubits towards the overflow tank: 80 talents of gold in two pitchers.”

“In the [drain] pipe (?) which is in the Eastern path to the [T]reasury, which is beside the entrance: tithes jars and scrolls in amongst the jars.” (John Allegro, *The Treasure of the Copper Scroll*, Doubleday, 1964)

It is possible that possession of the Copper Scroll in and of itself is not sufficient to find the treasure. The text from the last location states that it contains an “explanation and the measurements” of each item, which may be necessary to locate the treasure.

If the treasure described is real (and not apocalyptic, for example), it is obviously far too great an amount to have been the treasury of an obscure sect of desert monks. It would almost have to be the treasure of the Temple of Jerusalem. This would seem to lend credence to the view that the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves are the library of the Temple, although some scholars have argued that, because the scroll was found on a ledge, and was not buried on the cave floor, it may not have any connection with the other scrolls.

The scroll is now on display at the Amman (Jordan) Archaeological Museum.

MMT – Miqsat Ma’aseh ha-Torah

Unlike the other scrolls described so far, the MMT has only been recently published. The nomenclature means “Some Precepts of the Torah” or “Some Works of the Law”. It is (by some accounts) the key to solving the riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls. To others, it is an interesting, but not especially illuminating document.

The MMT (of which fragments of 6 separate copies have been found) is in three parts. The first part, comprised of 21 lines, appears to be a calendar – one item of note is that the group that wrote the MMT used a 364-day calendar. The next section contains 20/21 laws, with ritual purity being the most common theme.

The last section, generally described as an epilogue, may describe why the sect separated from those that disagreed with their laws. One phrase reads “we have separated ourselves from the multitude of the people”, fitting in well with the idea that the Dead Sea Scrolls are the library of a Jewish desert sect.

Elisha Qimron, one of the publishers of this scroll, believes that MMT is a letter from the teacher of righteousness to the wicked priest. John Strugnell, former Chief Scroll Editor, and co-publisher of MMT believes it is not a letter, but simply a work about the law and the Qumran community calendar. The passages that seem to support the idea that MMT is a letter include:

“We have (indeed) sent you some of the precepts of the Torah according to our decision, for your welfare and the welfare of your people...Consider all these things and ask Him that He strengthen your will and remove from you the plans of evil and the device of Belial so that you may rejoice at the end of time, finding that some of our practices are correct...” (*For This You Waited 35 Years?*, Biblical Archaeology Review, Nov/Dec '94, from the translation by Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell)

War Scroll – Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness



War Scroll (Library of Congress LC-DIG-matpc-13011)

“The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness”, often shortened to simply the “War Scroll”, describes a war between the forces of the “sons of light” against the sons of darkness, led by Belial. The scroll itself measures 9’ x 6”, and is written in 19 columns. The scroll begins with:

“At the beginning of the undertaking of the sons of light, they shall start against the lot of the sons of darkness, the army of Belial, against the troops of Edom and Moab and the sons of Ammon, against the people of Philistia, and against the troops of the Kittim of Assyria, and with them as helpers the violators of the covenant. The sons of Levi, the sons of Judah, and the sons of Benjamin, the exiles of the desert, shall fight against them with their forces with all their troops, when the exiles of the sons of light return from the desert to encamp in the desert of Jerusalem. And after the battle they shall go up from there against the king of the Kittim in Egypt...And the dominion of the Kittim shall come to an end, so that wickedness shall be laid low without any remnant; and there shall be no survivor of the sons of darkness.”
(Burrows, p. 390)

Once again, note the appearance of the mysterious Kittim, which, in this context, seem more to represent any foreigners that fight against the Israelis, rather than a particular group.

Note the use of the word Belial to indicate evil (“the army of Belial”) – a term used in several other scrolls, and also (once) by Paul, in the New Testament:

(2 Cor 6:15 NIV) “What harmony is there between Christ and Belial ? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?”

It may be inferred that the scroll is describing an apocalyptic, end-times battle, although this is not outlined explicitly in the text. The text is very specific about the order of battle, the requirements for the leaders, the numbers of the troops of the sons of light, etc. At one point, it describes that the sons of light will have 28,000 men of war and 6,000 charioteers whom “shall persue to destroy the enemy in the war of God, to eternal destruction.”

The sons of light carry many names on their banners, including “The Called of God”, “The Princes of God”, “The Order of God”, “The Chiefs of the Fathers of the Congregation”, “The Truth of God”, “The Righteousness of God”, “The Glory of God”, “The Justice of God”, “The Right Hand of God”, “The Assembly of God”, “The Congregation of God”, “The Tribes of God” and “The Armies of God”.

In favor of the text being an account of an apocalyptic battle are phrases such as “Holy angels are together with their armies”, and the role assigned to the Angel Michael:

“Today is his appointed time to lay low and to make fall the prince of the dominion of wickedness; and he will send eternal help to the lot he has redeemed by the power of the angel he has made glorious for rule, Michael, in eternal light, to give light in joy to all Israel, peace and blessing to the lot of God, to exalt among the gods the rule of Michael and the dominion of Israel over all flesh.” (Burrows, p. 399)

This is, of course, at least somewhat similar in tone to passages in the 12th chapter of Revelation:

(Rev 12:7 NIV) “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.

(Rev 12:8 NIV) But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.

(Rev 12:9 NIV) The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”

The Teacher of Righteousness

There are several mysterious characters or groups of people that appear in multiple scrolls, including the aforementioned *Belial*, the *Kittim*, etc. But perhaps the figures that have received the most attention in the modern history of the scrolls (although less so in recent years) are the mysterious teacher of righteousness and his persecutor, the “wicked priest”.

The teacher of righteousness is mentioned specifically in both the Habakkuk Commentary and the Damascus Document, and (perhaps) by inference in the MMT and Thanksgiving Scroll. Some scholars view that the teacher was the leader or founder of the sect. Certainly, the teacher is accorded special powers:

Commentary on Hab 1:4 “This means that the wicked man is the wicked priest, and the righteous man is the teacher of righteousness.” (Burrows, p. 365)

Commentary on Hab 2:1 “This means the teacher of righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants the prophets.” (Burrows, p. 368)

Damascus Document “And God observed their works, that they sought him with perfect heart; and he raised up for them a teacher of righteousness to lead them in the way of his heart.” (Burrows, p. 195)

We are told that the teacher of righteousness suffered unfairly at the hands of the “wicked priest”:

Commentary on Hab 2:8 “The wicked priest, whom, for the wrong done to the teacher of righteousness and the men of his party, God delivered into the hand of his enemies, afflicting him with a destroying scourge, in bitterness of soul, because he acted wickedly against his elect.” (Burrows, p. 153)

Commentary on Hab 2:15 “This means the wicked priest, who persecuted the teacher of righteousness in order to confound him at the indignation of his wrath, wishing to banish him; and at the time of their festival of rest, the Day of Atonement, he appeared to them to confound them and make them stumble on the day of their fasting, their sabbath of rest.” (Burrows, p. 370)

In some places, the teacher seems to have almost messianic properties:

Damascus Document “...the arising of him who will teach righteousness at the end of days.” (Burrows, p. 354)

Commentary on Hab 2:4 “This means all the doers of the law in the house of Judah, whom God will rescue from the house of judgement because of their labor and their faith in the teacher of righteousness.” (Burrows, p. 149)

While the “wicked priest” is not specifically identified, we know his character and destiny:

Commentary on Hab 2:5 “The wicked priest, who was named according to the truth when he first took office; but when he had begun to rule in Israel, his heart was lifted up, and he forsook God and betrayed the statutes for the sake of wealth. He plundered and assembled the wealth of men of violence who rebelled against God. He took the wealth of peoples, adding to himself iniquity and guilt; and ways of abominations he wrought, in all impurity of uncleanness.” (Burrows, p. 368)

Commentary on Hab 2:17 “God will execute judgment upon him and destroy him, as he plotted to destroy the poor. And as for what it says, ‘for the blood of a city and violence to a land’, this means the city, that is Jerusalem, in which the wicked priest wrought abominable works and defiled God’s sanctuary.” (Burrows, p. 370)

Almost from the time that the scrolls were initially found, the guessing game started – who was the teacher of righteousness? Who was the Wicked Priest? Among the theories:

- The teacher of righteousness was Onias III, the Chief Priest who was deposed by Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes in c. 175 B.C.
- The wicked priest could be Jason, the brother of Onias and successor as high priest, or Menelaus, who succeeded Jason. Menelaus was the patron of Antiochus Epiphanes IV, the Seleucid ruler who desecrated the Temple c. 168 B.C. (and, possibly, the “abomination that causes desolation” in Daniel).
- The wicked priest could be Aristobulus II or Hyrcanus II, who ruled at the end of Hasmonean Jewish dynasty
- The teacher and the wicked priest are “super-individual” figures, and do not represent actual historical personages
- The teacher of righteousness was Jesus (the scrolls seem to date to a period too early to support this hypothesis). This view is popular with those that feel that the Sectarrians are Ebionites, or early Christians.
- The teacher of righteousness is Hilkiyah, the Chief Priest during the reign of King Josiah
- The teacher of righteousness is a title, not a specific person
- Jesus as the Wicked Priest, John the Baptist as the teacher of righteousness (again, the scrolls seem to date to a period too early to support this hypothesis)
- Geza Vermes has written that the “Wicked Priest” could only be Jonathan Maccabeus:

“The chronological guidelines established in the preceding section locate the period in which this individual flourished between the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 BCE) and the probable date of the foundation at Qumran (150-140 BCE). During that time, five men held the office of High Priest. Three of them were pro-Greek: Jason, Menelaus and Alcimus. The remaining two were the Maccabee brothers, Jonathan and Simon. All the Hellenizers can be eliminated as candidates for the role of ‘Wicked Priest’ since none can be said to have enjoyed anything like good repute at the beginning of their ministry. Jason and Alcimus fail also because neither was killed by an enemy, as implied in 1QpHab VIII-IX. Jason died in exile (2 Mac. v, 7-9) and Alcimus in office (1 Mac. ix, 54-6). The Maccabee brothers, by contrast, meet all the conditions. The careers of both men fall easily into two stages, marked, in the case of Jonathan, by his acceptance of the High Priesthood from Alexander Balas, and in the case of Simon by his willingness to become a hereditary High Priest. Both were also ‘instruments of violence’ and both died by violence.

Jonathan is nevertheless to be chosen rather than Simon because he alone suffered the vengeance of the 'Chief of the Kings of Greece' and died at the hands of the 'violent of the nations', whereas Simon was murdered by his son-in-law (1 Mac. xvi, 14-16). A gallant defender of Jewish religion and independence, Jonathan succeeded the heroic Judas in 161 BCE when the latter fell in battle. But he qualified for the epithet 'Wicked Priest' when he accepted in 153-152 BCE from Alexander Balas, a heathen usurper of the Seleucid throne who had no right to grant them, the pontifical vestments which Jonathan was not entitled to wear. Captured later by a former general of Alexander Balas, Tryphon, he was killed by him at Bascama in Transjordan (1 Mac. xiii, 23)." (The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Geza Vermes, p. 60/61)

Under this latter theory, the Teacher of Righteousness was a Zadokite priest who left the Temple in protest when a non-Zadokite, Jonathan, assumed the High priesthood. Unfortunately, this individual's name is lost to history.

The teacher of righteousness attracted a lot of attention in the early days of scroll research, because of some seeming parallels with Jesus (a great prophet, put to death by enemies, who is expected "at the end of days".)

The Scroll Publishing Debates

With the discovery of the Cave 4 scrolls in 1952, the *Ecole Biblique et Archeologique Francaise* was faced with a daunting task – assembling 25,000 fragments into what was later estimated to be 500 documents. To accomplish this huge task, a team of scholars was assembled in 1953/54 to reassemble, translate, and write commentaries on the Cave 4 scrolls. The team included:

- Father Roland de Vaux (Chief Editor)
- Frank Cross from Harvard
- Father Jozef T. Milik (a Pole living in Paris)
- John Allegro from Oxford (an atheist)
- John Strugnell from Oxford (who would later lead the team)
- Abbe Jean Starcky from France
- Father Patrick Skehan from Washington D.C.
- Father Maurice Baillet from France



Controversy surrounded the team from the beginning. First, none of the scroll editors were Jewish. Second, there were concerns about how the scroll fragments were handled - these extremely fragile documents were often handled with bare hands, and were sometimes joined together with scotch tape. The fragments also were not stored in a temperature/humidity controlled environment, leading to eventual deterioration. Amazingly, though, the work of assembling and translating the documents was essentially done by 1960 – an amazing feat!

However, by 1985, less than half of the Cave 4 scrolls had been *published*. This 25 years of seeming silence led some to suspect that there was some sort of conspiracy regarding the scrolls – that they were being held back because of potentially explosive material contained within. The reality is probably more mundane – a combination of lack of funds (funds ran out in the 1960s, after the death of John D. Rockefeller) plus personal and political factors, as well as scholarly inertia inhibited further scroll publication.

By the late 1980s, the Biblical Archaeology Society, under the heroic efforts of Hershel Shanks (right), began a campaign to get the scrolls published. Major newspapers and magazines around the world picked up Shanks' battle cry.



In September of 1991, to force the issue, Biblical Archaeology Review (edited by Hershel Shanks) published a computer-reconstructed translation of the unpublished Cave 4 scrolls, using an unpublished concordance that had been created in the late 1950s. Also in September, the Huntington Library in San Marino, California published photographs of the unpublished scrolls that had been found in a safe in the library. Apparently, they had been sent there for safekeeping in the 1950s by the Scroll Team, but no non-disclosure agreement had ever been signed with the Library.

Finally, in November of 1991, the Biblical Archaeology Society published their own photographs of the Scrolls, given to them by an anonymous source. The “scroll cartel” was broken!

Eventually, Shanks and the Biblical Archaeology Society were sued by scroll scholar Elisha Qimron of Ben-Gurion University, who was reconstructing the aforementioned MMT text. Qimron eventually won the case, and was awarded 100,000 shekels – but the Cave 4 scrolls are no longer a mystery.

The Sectarrians

If one accepts that the scrolls are of a particular Jewish desert sect, and not the scrolls of the Temple, then the obvious question becomes – what sect? Unfortunately (and somewhat maddening), the scrolls do not name the sect that wrote them. The only seeming identification given in the texts is “the sons of light” or the “sons of Zadok” (possibly, the Chief Priest under Kings David and Solomon.)

1st century Jewish Historian Josephus tells us that there were three Jewish sects at the time of Jesus:

“For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of which are the Pharisees; of the second, the Sadducees; and the third sect, which pretends to a severer discipline, are called Essens.” (*Jewish Wars*, Book 2, Chapter 8, William Whiston, Translator)

So, was the Qumran sect one of those three, or was it a group whose name is lost to history? What do the scrolls themselves tell us about the sect? Taking the Damascus Document and the Manual of Discipline together (and assuming that they are rules for the same sect), we might make some of the following statements about the sect:

- They were headed by a “superintendent” or “examiner”, who seemed to be both teacher and Chief Financial Officer
- Judicial decisions were made by the assembled members of the group

- Apparently there was community ownership of property (However, the scrolls are a bit ambiguous on this point - the Damascus Document talks about 2 days wages from each person being given to the “poor and needy” each month)
- There appears to have been a required two-stage (one year each) probation period for entry into the sect
- They were very focused on ritual purity
- They believed that their purpose was to prepare the way of the Lord by the study of the Law

Manual of Discipline “When these things come to pass for the community in Israel, by these regulations they shall be separated from the midst of the session of the men of error to go to the wilderness to prepare there the way of the LORD...This is the study of the law, as he commanded through Moses...” (Burrows, 382)

- Prayer was an important element of their daily worship
- They were “a holy house for Israel, a foundation of the holy of holies for Aaron.” (Manual of Discipline, Burrows, p. 237)
- Those that violated Mosaic law willfully were excommunicated
- They scrupulously obeyed the Sabbath
- There was some degree of hierarchy – “the lesser obeying the greater”. “Priests and elders” were seated first in community meetings.

In terms of the theology of the sect, the following statements could be made:

- They believed in divine election (predestination)
- They appeared to have strong apocalyptic and eschatological views

Manual of Discipline “But God in the mysteries of his understanding and in his glorious wisdom has ordained a period for the ruin of error, and in the appointed time of punishment he will destroy it forever.” (Burrows, p. 376)

- They seemed to have believed in two Messiahs – “until there shall come a prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel.” (Manual of Discipline, Burrows, p. 383)
- They defined good and evil in terms of light and darkness
- Man is weak and utterly dependent on God
- Salvation appears to be through 1) the law 2) following the teacher of righteousness and 3) confessing before God “we have sinned”

Damascus Document “But all who hold fast to these ordinances, going out and coming in according to the law, and who listen to the voice of a teacher and confess before God, ‘We have sinned...’; who give ear to the voice of a teacher of righteousness...they shall prevail over all the sons of the world, and God will forgive them, and they shall see his salvation...” (Burrows, p. 357/8)

(Note: For further discussion on the theology of the Sectarians, see section “The Scrolls and Christianity”)

So who were these people? The majority view seems to be that they were Essenes, with a growing minority that believes that they were a breakaway group of Sadducees. (A very small minority feels that they were Christian Ebionites).

The Essenes

“On the west side of the Dead Sea, but out of range of the exhalations of the coast, is the solitary tribe of the Essenes, which is remarkable beyond all other tribes in the whole world, as it has no women and has renounced all sexual desire, has no money, and has only palm trees for company. Day by day the throng of refugees is recruited to an equal number by numerous accessions of persons tired of life and driven thither by the waves of fortune to adopt their manner. Thus through thousands of ages (incredible to relate) a race into which no one is born lives forever; so prolific for their advantage is other men’s weariness of life!” (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*; translation from *The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Essenes or Sadducees?*, James C. Vanderkam, Bible Review, April 1991)

Most of what we know about the Essenes comes from 1st century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (c. 37 – 95 A.D.), with additions from Pliny the Elder and Philo of Alexandria. There are many parallels between what Josephus tells us about the Essenes, and the picture we have of the Sectarrians from the scrolls (see following table).

However, there are some differences, too. For example, Josephus tells us that the Essenes numbered about 4,000, and “they have no one certain city, but many of them dwell in every city” – certainly a different picture from this seemingly monastic desert sect. Also, the teacher of righteousness, who is so prominent in at least two of the scrolls, is not even hinted at in Josephus. However, there are enough similarities between Josephus and the scrolls to at least build a case for the Sectarrians being Essenes, as the following quote and table demonstrate:

“Todd Beall concluded that there are 27 parallels between Josephus and the scrolls regarding the Essenes, 21 probable parallels, 10 cases in which Josephus makes claims about the Essenes that have no known parallels among the scrolls, and 6 discrepancies between them.” (*The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Essenes or Sadducees?* James C. Vanderkam, Bible Review, April 1991)

Josephus	Dead Sea Scrolls
Abbreviations used: JA = <i>Jewish Antiquities</i> , JW = <i>Jewish Wars</i> , DD = <i>Damascus Document</i> , MOD = <i>Manual of Discipline</i>	
“Nor is there any one to be found among them who hath more than another; for it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order...” (JW, Book 2, Chapter 8)	“If the lot determines that he is to be admitted to the community...his wealth and wages shall be put at the disposal of the man who has supervision over the wages of the masters.” (MOD, Burrows, p. 379)
“They also have stewards appointed to take care of their common affairs, who every one of them have no separate business for any, but what is for the uses of them all...” (JW, Book 2, Chapter 8)	“And this is the order for the superintendent of the camp: He shall instruct the many in the works of God...and every one who is added to his congregation he shall examine him as to his works...and no man shall make an agreement for buying and selling unless he has told the superintendent who is in the camp...” (DD, Burrows, p. 362)
“But now if any one hath a mind to come over to their sect, he is not	“When he has completed a year within the community, the masters

Josephus	Dead Sea Scrolls
immediately admitted, but he is prescribed the same method of living which they use for a year... for after this demonstration of his fortitude, his temper is tried two more years; and if he appear to be worthy, they then admit him into their society..." (JW, Book 2, Chapter 8)	shall be questioned about his affairs...the new member shall not touch the sacred drink of the masters until he has completed a second year among the community of men." (MOD, Burrows, p. 379)
"But for those that are caught in any heinous sins, they cast them out of their society." (JW, Book 2, Chapter 8)	"Any man of them who transgresses a word of the law of Moses overtly or with deceit shall be dismissed from the council of the community and shall not come back again." (MOD, Burrows, p. 382)
"...they pass sentence by the votes of a court that is fewer than a hundred..." (JW, Book 2, Chapter 8)	"And this is the order for the judges of the congregation: There shall be as many as ten men chosen by the congregation according to the time." (DD, Burrows, p. 359) "There shall be in the council of the community twelve men..." (MOD, Burrows, p. 381)
"Now after the time of their preparatory trial is over, they are parted into four classes; and so far are the juniors inferior to the seniors, that if the seniors should be touched by the juniors, they must wash themselves, as if they had intermixed themselves with the company of a foreigner." (JW, Book 2, Chapter 8)	"And this is the order of the session of all the camps: They shall be enrolled by their names; the priests first, the Levites second, the sons of Israel third, and the proselyte fourth." (DD, Burrows, p. 362)
"But the sect of the Essens affirm, that fate governs all things..." (JA, Book 13, Chapter 5)	"To those whom God has chosen he has given them for an eternal possession..." (MOD, Burrows, p. 388)
"They also avoid spitting in the midst of them..." (JW, Book 2, Chapter 8)	"A man that spits into the midst of the session of masters shall be punished thirty days." (MOD, Burrows, p. 380)
"A priest says grace before meat; and it is unlawful for any one to taste of the food before grace be said. The same priest, when he hath dined, says grace again after meat..." (JW, Book 2, Chapter 8)	"...the priest shall stretch out his hand first to pronounce a blessing with the first portion of the bread and the wine..." (MOD, Burrows, p. 378)
"Nor is there ever any clamor or disturbance to pollute their house, but they give every one leave to	"...so that each may render his opinion to the council of the community. A man shall not speak

Josephus	Dead Sea Scrolls
“speak in their turn...” (JW, Book 2, Chapter 8)	“in the midst of his neighbor’s words, before his brother finishes speaking” (MOD, Burrows, p. 378/9)

(Josephus translations from *The Life And Works Of Flavius Josephus*, by William Whiston, Translator.)

Further backing for the Sectarrians-as-Essenes theory may be found in a passage from Pliny the Elder:

[Essenes live] “away from the western shore [of the Dead Sea], far enough to avoid harmful things, a people alone...companions of palm trees.” (Burrows, p. 280)

This account seems more in keeping with a desert monastic sect than the account of Josephus stating that “many of them dwell in every city.”

One of the great mysteries of Essene/Scroll scholarship is the fact that the New Testament doesn’t mention the Essenes, although it mentions the other three groups of Josephus – Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots. It is especially mysterious given the fact that Josephus wrote more about the Essenes than about the Pharisees and Sadducees combined, and all of the 1st century secular historians wrote about the Essenes with such respect and enthusiasm. Why no Essenes in the New Testament? Here are some possibilities:

- Because the Essenes lived in remote places, Jesus never came in contact with them during his ministry. Plus, with only 4,000 Essenes in the Levant, they made up a very small portion of the population (there were, for example, about 80,000 people living in Jerusalem alone during the time of Christ).
- Some of the apostles of Jesus/followers of John the Baptist were Essenes, so it wasn’t thought necessary to identify an “inside” group in the New Testament.
- The Essenes appear somewhere in the New Testament under another name or description (Essenes means something along the lines of “Pious Ones”, “Holy Ones”, or “Healers”).

Sadducees

A minority view is that the sectarians were a break-away group of Sadducees. The word *sadducee* is a derivative of *zadokite*, and the one label that the scrolls seem to apply to the sectarians is “sons of Zadok”. The view of sectarians-as-Sadducees is represented here by Professor Lawrence H. Schiffman:

“I believe the sect was formed when a group of Sadducean priests left the Temple service in the aftermath of the Hasmonean takeover of the Temple soon after the Maccabean revolt, probably by about 152 B.C.E.” (*New Light on the Pharisees*, Lawrence Schiffman, Bible Review, June ’92)

One possible argument against the sectarians-as-Sadducees view is that the sectarians seemed to highly honor the Old Testament prophets, which was not a practice of the Sadducees (as we understand them).

Qumran



The function of the site at Qumran, located on the west coast of the Dead Sea, has generated almost as much controversy as the scrolls themselves. Is the site (located below the scroll caves) connected to the scrolls? Was the site an Essene monastery where the scrolls were produced?

Theories regarding the function of the site abound:

- Essene monastery (Father Roland de Vaux)
- A “*villa rustica*”, sort of a resort for rich Jerusalemites (Robert Donceel and Pauline Donceel-Voute)
- A Judean military fortress, destroyed in the battle against the Romans (Norman Golb)
- A rest stop (“commercial *entrepot*”) (Crown & Cansdale)
- A fortified farm (Yizhar Hirschfield)

Father Roland de Vaux, who excavated the site in 1951/56, first promulgated the view of the site as an Essene monastery. Adding to the conspiracy theories regarding the scrolls is the fact that de Vaux died in 1971 without publishing his final report on the site. The report still has not been published to this day, although the *Ecole Biblique* published photos and plans from de Vaux’s excavation 1994.

The timeline established by de Vaux for the site is something like this:

- 8th century B.C. – earliest signs of habitation
- 2nd century B.C. - the site is re-occupied after a long abandonment
- 31 B.C. - an earthquake damaged the site, causing cracks (which can still be seen today) in foundations and stairs
- 68 A.D. - the site was destroyed (out of the 1200 coins that were found at the site, none dated after 68 A.D.), and perhaps briefly occupied by the Roman army



Qumran in the late 1940s-early 1950s (Library of Congress LC-DIG-matpc-13008)

The period of time related to the theory that the site is connected with the sectarians is from the re-occupation in the 2nd century B.C. to the destruction in 68 A.D. This time period, of course, correlates roughly with the estimated ages of the scrolls.

So how did de Vaux decide that the site was an Essene monastery? One part of the puzzle is a quote from Pliny the Elder (23-79 A.D.), which states that the town of En Gedi (see map), which is located about midway down the west coast of the Dead Sea, was “lying below” a settlement of Essenes:

“Lying below the Essenes was formerly the town of Engedi, second only to Jerusalem in the fertility of its land and in its groves of palm trees, but now like Jerusalem a heap of ashes.” (*The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Essenes or Sadducees?*, James C. Vanderkam, Bible Review, April 1991)

This seems plausible enough – there aren’t any other known sites between En Gedi and Qumran that could have been an Essene settlement. However, some scholars have postulated that “lying below” doesn’t mean “south of”, but rather that the Essenes settlement was on the hill overlooking En Gedi.

Other reasons given by de Vaux as to why the site was 1) an Essene monastery and 2) connected with the scrolls in the caves included:

- Father de Vaux excavated a room where he found two inkwells (a third was later found in another room) and some strange shelf-like objects. Interpreting that the shelf-like objects were desks, he promptly christened the room the “scriptorium” (a medieval monastic term), and decided that this was where the scrolls must have been written.



The “scriptorium” at Qumran

- He excavated a large room which contained a number of dishes and goblets, and called it the “refectory” (another medieval monastic term)

- He excavated 50 graves out of the 1200 on the site. Finding only 3-4 women/children, he decided that this fit well with the idea of a site populated by celibate males
- He interpreted the elaborate water/cistern system as evidence of the importance of water purification rites to the inhabitants
- Pottery found in caves and at the site were similar. Also, a kiln was found that may have fired the pottery found in the caves.

While interesting, the evidence put forth by Roland de Vaux that Qumran was an Essene monastery is inconclusive. Among the arguments against the concept:

- No manuscripts of any kind were found in the site excavation, although other organic materials were found, such as palm leaves, wood, reeds, etc.
- When attempts were made to re-construct the shelf-like objects, it seems to show that they would be the wrong height to act as desks.
- Robert Donceel, and his wife Pauline Donceel-Voute were engaged by the *Ecole Biblique et Archeologique Francaise* to write a final report based on the notes of Father de Vaux. They have argued that de Vaux found many luxury goods during his excavation, which are not in keeping with an ascetic group like the Essenes.
- The 1200 coins discovered within the site seem to indicate that Qumran might have been some sort of commercial center
- No synagogue was found
- No religious objects were found in the excavations

The arguments continue to this day.

The Scrolls & Christianity

Since the original discovery of the scrolls, a number of theories have been voiced regarding whether there is a connection between the scrolls and Christianity. Do the scrolls undermine Christian doctrine? Did the Sectarians have any connection with early Christians? Did the sect serve as some sort of prototype for later Christians?

In my opinion, the scrolls were written by a late inter-Testamental Jewish group, probably some form of Essenes. The scrolls do nothing to challenge core Christian beliefs, but they do much to help illuminate the context out of which Christianity grew – a very Jewish context, but not necessarily the Jewish context that was assumed before the discovery of the scrolls.

Prior to the discovery of the scrolls, most of our views on what comprised Judaism at the time of Jesus came from the only group which survived the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. – the Pharisees (which would become the rabbinical Jewish movement that is still with us today). With the discovery of the scrolls, we find that Jewish theology was much more varied than has been previously thought.

The Jews of the scrolls show us a theology that was much more apocalyptic and much more messianic than was understood before the discovery. Prior to the discovery of the scrolls, most Christians and Jews viewed Jewish apocryphal, apocalyptic works such as 2 Esdras or Enoch (I) as oddities. The scrolls would seem to indicate that such apocalyptic writings may have represented the mainstream Jewish thought of at least one of the three major Jewish sects at the time of Christ.

The scrolls indicate that many doctrines that would later take hold in Christianity grew out of the soil of an older Jewish tradition. Predestination, belief in angels, a well-developed concept of hell and the devil (Sheol/Abaddon and Belial, in the scrolls), and even (possibly) the belief in a divine messiah who would suffer at the hands of his doubters are all found in the scrolls.

Does this challenge the validity or originality of Christianity? Not at all. Christians have always viewed that the Old Testament was a precursor to the New – and that the Old Testament describes a divine Messiah that would find his fulfillment in Jesus Christ. But the Old Testament ends about 400 years before the birth of Christ.

The scrolls help fill in the theological gaps in the development of (some) Jewish thought in the inter-Testamental period. The gaps in question help explain why Jesus, who did not fit the traditional messianic warrior/king profile that we had heretofore thought was expected in Israel 2,000 years ago, might have been accepted as readily as he was. There appears that there was a Jewish tradition of a “suffering servant” messiah; and there may even have been a tradition that the “suffering servant” would be divine.

This in no way suggests that the sectarians were prototypical Christians – the sectarians had a strong belief that upholding the Mosaic law and adhering to ritual purity were the paths to salvation – hardly doctrines of Pauline theology! However, the scrolls do describe elements of a tradition that existed in Judaism that would eventually split off into Christianity and rabbinical Judaism:

“Second Temple Judaism can now be seen as a transition period in which the sectarianism and apocalypticism of the period gradually gave away to rabbinic Judaism, on the one hand, and Christianity, on the other. Indeed, it is now clear that the Second Temple period was a kind of sorting process.” (*The Significance of the Scrolls*, Lawrence Schiffman, Bible Review, Oct. 1990)

The scrolls speak a language that would have been understood by the early Christians, and is recognizable even today. Two examples follow.

Compare scroll 4Q525 (Cave 4, fragment 525) with Mat 5:3-11:

4Q525 “Blessed the man who has attained Wisdom and walks in the law of the Most High/...[Blessed is he who speaks truth] with a pure heart and who does not slander with his tongue/...Blessed is he who seeks (Wisdom) with pure hands and who does not go after her with a deceitful heart...” (Shanks, p. 64)

(Mat 5:3 NIV) “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(Mat 5:4 NIV) Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

(Mat 5:5 NIV) Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

(Mat 5:6 NIV) Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

(Mat 5:7 NIV) Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

(Mat 5:8 NIV) Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

(Mat 5:9 NIV) Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

(Mat 5:10 NIV) Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(Mat 5:11 NIV) Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.”

Compare scroll 4Q521 with Mat 11:5:

4Q521 “[The hea]vens and the earth will listen to His Messiah...Over the poor His spirit will hover and will renew the faithful with His power...He...liberates the captives, restores sight to the blind, straightens the b[ent]...The Lord will accomplish glorious things which have never been seen...He will heal the wounded, and revive the dead and bring good news to the poor.” (Shanks, p. 65)

(Mat 11:5 NIV) “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”

Messianic comparisons

The scrolls seem to indicate that the sectarians may have been expecting a divine messiah that would suffer at the hands of his detractors. Christians have long interpreted the “suffering servant” passages in Isaiah to pertain to the messiah. The scrolls give added support to this view.

One enigmatic scroll seems to discuss the messiah being (depending on the translation) “begat”, “engendered”, or “fathered” by God:

1Q28a/1QSa “This is the assembly of famous men, [those summoned to] the gathering of the community council, when [God] **begets the Messiah with them.**” (Translated by Florentino Garcia Martinez, Shanks, p. 66)

In a commentary on 2 Samuel 7:14, a messianic figure from the line of David is discussed – who will rule at the end of time:

4Q174 “...he is the Branch of David who shall rise...[to rule] in Zion [at the end] of time.” (Shanks, p. 68)

(2 Sam 7:14 NIV) “I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.”

A startling passage from the scrolls talks of a figure that will have “everlasting sovereignty”, and will be called “Son of the Most High”. Compare this with Luke 1:32-33:

4Q246 “Affliction will come to earth...[] and great carnage among countries...[] the kings of Assyria [and Egypt...[he] will be great on earth...all will serve...he will be called great...and by his name he will be designated...‘Son of God’ will he be called and ‘Son of the Most High’ they will call him....His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all his ways will be truth. He will jud[ge] the earth in truth and all will make peace. The sword will cease from the earth and all provinces will worship him. The great God will be his patron...His sovereignty is everlasting sovereignty...” (Shanks, p. 69)

(Luke 1:32 NIV) “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,

(Luke 1:33 NIV) and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

Another enigmatic scroll seems to prove that (some) Jews at the time of Jesus interpreted the Isaiah “suffering servant” passages as referring to the messiah. The scroll talks of this figure as atoning for all of the children of his generation. And finally, in an unfortunately incomplete fragment, there is discussion of “hanging” and “let not the nail approach him”, but the fragment is not clear if it is talking about the same person as in the earlier quotes.

4Q541 “He will atone for all the children of his generation, and he will be sent to all the children of his [pe]ople. His word is like a word of heaven, and his teaching is in accordance with the will of God. His

eternal sun will shine, and his light will be kindled in all the corners of the earth, and it will shine in the darkness. Then the darkness will pass away [fr]om the earth, and thick darkness from the dry land...

They will speak many words against him, and they will invent many [lie]s and fictions against him and speak shameful things about him. Evil will overthrow his generation...His situation will be one of lying and violence [and] the people will go astray in his days, and be confounded...

...and do not afflict the weak by wasting or hanging...[Let] not the nail approach him..." (Translation from *The Suffering Servant at Qumran*, John J. Collins, Bible Review, Dec. 1993)

Other theological similarities

There are other similarities between the scroll theology and Christian theology. For example, the Thanksgiving Psalm talks about how righteousness only comes from God. Compare to Paul in Romans:

Thanksgiving Psalm "I know that righteousness does not belong to a man, nor to a son of man blamelessness of conduct; to the Most High God belong all works of righteousness" (Burrows, p. 334)

(Rom 1:17 NIV) "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'

(Rom 3:10 NIV) As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one;

(Rom 3:11 NIV) there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.'"

As in Christianity, the scrolls attach great importance to the influence of the Holy Spirit on individuals:

Thanksgiving Psalm "A man's way is not established except by the Spirit which God created for him to make blameless a way for the sons of man." (Burrows, p. 335)

Damascus Document "And he caused them to know by his anointed his Holy Spirit and a revelation of truth." (Burrows, p. 350)

Manual of Discipline "But in a spirit of true counsel for the ways of a man all his iniquities will be atoned, so that he will look at the light of life, and in a holy spirit he will be united in his truth; and he will be cleansed from all his iniquities; and in an upright and humble spirit his sin will be atoned, and in the submission of his soul to all the statutes of God his flesh will be cleansed, that he may be sprinkled with water for impurity and sanctify himself with water of cleanness." (Burrows, p. 373)

The scrolls indicate a strong belief in predestination:

Manual of Discipline "In these two spirits are the origins of all the sons of man, and in their divisions all the hosts of men have their inheritance in their generations. In the ways of the two spirits men walk. And all the performance of their works is in their two divisions, according to each man's inheritance, whether much or little, for all the periods of eternity." (Burrows, p. 375)

And finally, the scrolls seem to illuminate a language that would later be echoed in the Gospel of John. Because of the references to *logos*, and the comparison between light and darkness in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, poor John has been accused of everything from being too Hellenized, to (gasp) being a secret gnostic! The scrolls seem to indicate that John's introduction to the Gospel of John has not Greek or gnostic roots, but...Jewish roots, which is, of course, exactly what we should expect from John!

Manual of Discipline "Everything that is he establishes by his purpose, and without him it is not done"

Manual of Discipline [God] “created man to have dominion over the world and made for him two spirits, that he might walk by them until the appointed time of his visitation; they are the spirits of truth and of error. In the abode of light are the origins of truth, and from the source of darkness are the origins of error. In the hand of the prince of lights is dominion over all sons of righteousness; in the way of light they walk. And in the hand of the angel of darkness is all dominion over the sons of error; and in the ways of darkness they walk. And by the angel of darkness is the straying of all the sons of righteousness...but the God of Israel and his angel of truth have helped all the sons of light.” (Burrows, p. 374)

(John 1:1 NIV) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

(John 1:2 NIV) He was with God in the beginning.

(John 1:3 NIV) Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

(John 1:4 NIV) In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

(John 1:5 NIV) The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”

A Gospel among the scrolls?

One more theory should be mentioned, if for no other reason that it has received a great deal of press. Jose O’Callaghan, a Spanish Jesuit believes that some fragments from Cave 7 are from the Gospel of Mark. The theory is just (barely) possible. Cave 7 was unique because all 18/19 fragments found were in Greek (most of the other scrolls are in Hebrew or Aramaic). Greek was, of course, the language of the early Christians, but it was also the language of Hellenized Jews.

O’Callaghan believes that scroll 7Q5 is from Mark 6:52-53. However, the fragment only contains 20 Greek letters. Only 10 can be read with any certainty, and there is only one complete word (“and”). Graham Stanton identifies the letters (in bold) that exist in the fragment:

“...for they did not understand **about** the loaves, but **their** hearts were hardened

And when they had crossed over, they came to land at **Genessaret** and **moored** the boat...” (*A Gospel among the Scrolls?*, Graham Stanton, Bible Review, December 1995)

Summary

The Dead Sea Scrolls, the greatest archaeological find of the 20th century, have much to tell us about the Jewish roots of Christianity, and provide a richer illumination of Judaism at the time of Christ than was heretofore possible. In the words of Hershel Shanks, editor of *Biblical Archaeology Review*:

“While the scrolls tell us nothing directly about Jesus or early Christianity, they tell us a great deal about the language Jesus spoke, about such concepts as ‘Messiah’ and ‘Son of God,’ about the way Jesus and early Christians understood and interpreted the Hebrew Bible, about modes of thought of Jesus’ contemporaries, and about the other Jewish movements that were swirling around in the ideological and theological maelstrom of Judea at the time. If the scrolls emphasize anything with regard to Christianity, it is that Jesus and his message were very much related to – were part of and grew out of – what was happening in the contemporaneous Jewish world.” (Shanks, p. 198)

Timeline

Date	Event
c. 250 B.C.	First of the Dead Sea Scrolls are written
175 – 164 B.C.	Rule of Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes IV, who may have been the prototype for the “abomination that causes desolation” in Daniel

Date	Event
173 B.C.	High Priest Onias III deposed by Antiochus Epiphanes IV and replaced by Jason
170 – 168 B.C.	Antiochus Epiphanes IV desecrates the Temple at Jerusalem and kills 40,000 Jews
c. 167	Beginning of Maccabean revolt under Judas Maccabeus
141 – 37 B.C.	Rule of the Hasmonean dynasty in Palestine
63 B.C.	Pompey annexes Palestine
68 A.D.	Last of the Dead Sea Scrolls are written
June, 69 A.D.	According to Josephus, Vespasian had a garrison at Jericho. This may have been the garrison that destroyed Qumran.
3 rd century	Early Church Father Origen writes of a finding of Biblical manuscripts in a jar near Jericho!!
c. 325 - 350 A.D.	Still extant <i>Codex Vaticanus</i> created - Old Testament based on Septuagint
c. 350 A.D.	<i>Codex Sinaiticus</i> (now in the British Museum) written - Old Testament based on Septuagint
800 A.D.	Letter by Nestorian patriarch of Seleucia, Timotheus – discusses books found 10 years earlier in a cave near Jericho
10 th century	Oldest extant Masoretic Text of Hebrew Bible written – Aleppo Codex; partially burned by Syrian mobs in 1947
c. 1005	Oldest extant complete Masoretic Text written – Leningrad Codex
1897	Solomon Schechter finds first known copy of the <i>Damascus Document</i> in Cairo, later also found at Qumran
Feb. 1947	According to one version, the scrolls are discovered by Bedouin Muhammad Ahmad el-Hammed, when searching for some lost sheep
April 1947	The Bedouin brings the scrolls to Bethlehem; eventually 3 scrolls purchased by Faidi Salahi (for \$14) and 4 by Khalil Iskander Shahin (a.k.a. Kando); <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kando takes the scrolls to the Syrian Orthodox archbishop of Jerusalem Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel • Salahi takes his 3 scrolls to Hebrew University archaeology professor Eleazer Lupa Sukenik
Summer 1947	Scrolls declared worthless by Stephan Hannan Stephan of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine
Jan. – Mar. 1948	Mar Samuel buys the four scrolls from Kando, reportedly paying \$100; scrolls taken to the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. Photos of the scrolls are sent to William Foxwell Albright at Johns Hopkins University.
May 14, 1948	State of Israel declared; Arab states of Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, and Transjordan (Jordan) invade Israel
May 15, 1948	“My heartiest congratulations on the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times.” (Letter from William Fox Albright, Shanks, p. 18)
Jan. 1949	Samuel brings scrolls to United States, at the invitation of

Date	Event
	Professor Millar Burrows of Yale (also Director of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem)
Jan. 1949	Professor Solomon Zeitlin of the Dropsie College claims Habakkuk Commentary medieval in origin
Jan. 28, 1949	A Jordanian captain named Akkash el-Zebn discovers the original cave from which the seven scrolls were taken; 70 fragments from other documents are also found
Fall 1949	Mar Samuel scrolls displayed at the Library of Congress
1950	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery</i> published by American School of Oriental Research • Professor Sukenik issues second volume of the Hebrew University's manuscripts
1951/56	Khirbet Qumran, located south of the scroll caves, is excavated by Father Roland de Vaux of the French <i>Ecole Biblique et Archeologique Francaise</i>
March 1952	More caves in Qumran area examined. "Cave 3" – fragments of Ezekiel, Psalms, Jubilees & unknown works found – also, the copper scroll
1952	Bedouin find fragments from over 500 manuscripts in "Cave 4" – no intact scrolls. Scrolls found as much as a meter under the cave floor.
late 1952	Kando brings first batch of Cave 4 fragments to Palestine Archaeological Museum (later, the Rockefeller Museum); eventually, all fragments are purchased by the President of the Museum, Roland de Vaux, for about \$2.80 per square centimeter
1953/4	Team of scholars assembled by the Jordanians to sort and translate the Cave 4 fragments
June 1, 1954	Mar Samuel places classified ad in the Wall Street Journal to sell the scrolls <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The Four Dead Sea Scrolls – Biblical Manuscripts dating back to at least 200 BC, are for sale. This would be an ideal gift to an educational or religious institution by an individual or group."
1954	Scrolls eventually purchased through an intermediary for \$250,000 by archaeologist Yigael Yadin for the State of Israel. Yadin is the son of Eleazer Lupa Sukenik.
Feb. 13, 1955	Israeli prime minister Moshe Sharett holds press conference to announce that the seven original Dead Sea Scrolls are now all in Israel.
Spring 1955	New finds in Caves 7/10. Cave 7 contained 19 fragments in Greek
1956	Cave 11 discovered by the Bedouins – three intact scrolls – Leviticus (written in pre-Babylonian exile script), Psalms (including unknown Psalms), Temple Scroll
1957	Concordance begun of non-Biblical scrolls from cave 4; manuscripts assigned to various scholars on the scroll team
1959	Father Jozef Milik publishes translation and commentary on Copper Scroll
1959/60	John Allego conducts search for Copper Scroll treasure

Date	Event
	sites; none discovered
1960	Most Cave 4 fragments had been identified; most scrolls had been translated but not published
1960	John D. Rockefeller dies, source of most of the funding for the Cave 4 scroll team
1965	Shrine of the Book opens in Jerusalem, housing the original 7 scrolls
1966	Jordan nationalizes the private Palestine Archaeological Museum
1967	Israel captures the now-nationalized Palestine Archaeological Museum during the Six Day War
1970	John Allegro publishes <i>The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross</i> , committing professional suicide
1971	Father Roland de Vaux dies without publishing a final report on the excavations at Qumran
March 16, 1972	Times of London runs front page story regarding the claim by Spanish papyrologist Jose O'Callaghan, stating that a fragment of the Gospel of Mark has been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls
1976	Father Milik publishes 439 page commentary & translation entitled <i>The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4</i>
1985	Over 50% of the Cave 4 scrolls still unpublished, and inaccessible to scholars
1987	John Strugnell becomes chief editor of Cave 4 scrolls
1987	<i>Ecole Biblique et Archeologique Francaise</i> engages Belgian scholar Robert Donceel to write a final report based on the notes of Father de Vaux; eventually joined by his wife Pauline Donceel-Voute
1988	Strugnell publishes 30 private copies of the 1957 Cave 4 concordance
1988	John Allegro dies at age 65
1990	John Strugnell resigns as Chief Editor of Cave 4 scrolls, after making seeming anti-Semitic comments in an interview with an Israeli journalist; Hebrew University professor Emanuel Tov of Hebrew University appointed Chief Editor – expands team to nearly 70 scholars
Sept. 4, 1991	Biblical Archaeology Review publishes a computer-reconstructed translation of the unpublished Cave 4 scrolls, using the 1988 privately-published concordance
Sept. 21, 1991	Huntington Library in San Marino California makes available photographs of the unpublished scrolls found in a safe in the library
Nov. 20, 1991	Biblical Archaeology Society publishes photographs (from an unknown source) of unpublished scrolls
1994	<i>Ecole Biblique</i> publishes 538 de Vaux excavation photographs and 48 plans

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For This You Waited 35 Years?	Translation by Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell	Biblical Archaeology Review	Nov./ Dec. '94
Holy Bible - New International Version		Zondervan Publishing House	1973
Life And Works Of Flavius Josephus, The	William Whiston, Translator	Ages Software	1997
Mystery and Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls, The	Hershel Shanks	Random House	1998
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Treasure of the Copper Scroll, The	John Allegro	Doubleday	1964

All photos from *Dead Sea Scrolls Slide Set*, Biblical Archaeology Society, 1993, except as otherwise noted

About the Author

Robert C. Jones grew up in the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area. He made his living as a hotel lounge band leader/musician from 1974-1981. In 1981, he moved to the Atlanta, Georgia area, where he received a B.S. in Computer Science at DeVry Institute of Technology. From 1984-2009, Robert worked for Hewlett-Packard as a computer consultant.



Robert is an ordained elder in the Presbyterian Church. He has written and taught numerous adult Sunday School courses (see front inside cover). He has also been active in choir ministries over the years, and has taught the *Disciples* Bible Study five times.

Robert is also President of the Kennesaw Historical Society, for whom he has written several books, including “The Law Heard 'Round the World - An Examination of the Kennesaw Gun Law and Its Effects on the Community”, “Retracing the Route of the General - Following in the Footsteps of the Andrews Raid”, and “Kennesaw (Big Shanty) in the 19th Century”. A new book, “Images of America: Kennesaw”, was published by Arcadia in 2006.

Robert has also written several books on ghost towns in the Southwest, including in Death Valley, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and Mojave National Preserve.

In 2005, Robert co-authored a business-oriented book entitled “Working Virtually: The Challenges of Virtual Teams”. His co-authors were Lise Pace and Rob Oyung.

His interests include the Civil War, Medieval Monasteries, American railroads, ghost towns, hiking in Death Valley and the Mojave, and Biblical Archaeology.

Robert is available as a guest speaker on Christian history and theology topics in the Atlanta Metro area, and North Georgia. See <http://www.sundayschoolcourses.com/speaker.htm> for more information.

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