

## Dead Sea Scrolls & the New Testament (Similarities & Contrasts)

Information is based on internal readings of key documents among the Qumran scrolls (listing on page 3), the New Testament, and external historical evidence.

### 1) The Communities

Qumran Jewish Settlement	Nazarene "Messianic" Movement
Originated probably in mid-2nd cent. BCE	Originated about AD/CE 30
Origin unknown; early principles apparently shaped by the Righteous Teacher, who sought to live in the wilderness away from sinful people	Founded by Yeshua Messiah (Jesus the Messiah), who called his first disciples & commissioned them to evangelize Israel and the world
A Jewish conservative, separatist movement	A Jewish conservative, restoration movement
Devoted to the Law of Moses and the Hebrew Bible	Accepted entire Hebrew Bible as "the Word of God," but did not impose the Law on non-Jewish converts
Group composed of priests and laymen, with priority given to priests; some women belonged	Many priests believed in Yeshua, but no distinction was made between them and others; women disciples always included, a few were "apostles"
Admission into group only after 2-year probation	Immediate admission upon profession of faith in Yeshua Messiah
Communal living & poverty enforced on all joining the group	Community sharing of goods practiced voluntarily only by some; some were wealthy merchants
Council of "Twelve and Three" had some administrative function	Twelve apostles ["sent ones"] were sent by Yeshua to proclaim his message, not to administer congregations; shepherds and deacons did that
Rigid Sabbath-keepers	Observed Sabbath & other biblical festivals, but as "the Lord of the Sabbath" Yeshua deliberately broke some traditional sabbath laws
Denounced the Temple operators in Jerusalem, but may have sent offerings	Yeshua and his disciples observe the feasts in Jerusalem; later Jewish disciples, including Paul, participated in Temple services
Condemned those who hold Pharisaic views for hypocrisy and distortion of the Torah	Pharisees are condemned for hypocrisy and negation of the Word of God; though many Pharisees believed in Yeshua
Practiced repeated ritual washing or immersion for members in good standing; denied it to those seeking admission	Administered immersion one time to anyone seeking fellowship, upon confession of faith in Yeshua and repentance

**Qumran Covenanters**

**John the Immerser (Baptizer)**

Qumran village located on northwest shore of Dead Sea, near Jericho & Jordan River	John evangelized at Jordan River near Jericho, a few miles northeast of Qumran
Isaiah 40:3 a founding text: “In the wilderness, prepare the way of the LORD”	Isaiah 40:3 is his mission text: “A voice crying, In the wilderness, prepare the way of the LORD”
Rejected the Temple system & its leaders in Jerusalem as hopelessly corrupt	Was not anti-Temple per se. His parents were from priestly families; his father served in the Temple as priest
Abstained from wine and strong drink	Abstained from wine and strong drink, as a Nazarite (Num 6:2; Jud 13:5)
Practiced multiple daily immersions on same members	Practiced multiple daily immersions only on newly repentant sinners
Did not see themselves as prophets, but interpreters of the biblical prophets	Taught that he was a prophet
Exclusivist; rejected outsiders & unclean Jews who did not join in their New Covenant	Went among common people & invited all to repent to enter kingdom of God & to become disciples of Yeshua

**2) Some Beliefs — Similarities & Contrasts**

**Qumran Covenanters**

**Jewish Disciples of Yeshua**

Worshiped the God of Israel	Worshiped the God of Israel and Yeshua as the Son and Messiah of God
Had elaborate belief system in angels & the hierarchies of heaven; much not in HB	Had simplified system, based on HB passages
Man essentially sinful & unable to please God as he is; needs new or holy spirit (nature, disposition), “the Spirit of Truth”	Man essentially sinful & unable to please God as he is; needs new, holy spirit (nature, disposition): the Spirit of Yeshua
Strongly deterministic; human will negated, God's predestinating will is unchangeable	Individual willed decision of faith determines one's destiny with God
Exclusivist group; taught hatred for those outside the group (unclean Jews & non-Jews)	Welcomed Jews and non-Jews, women and children, into the blessings of faith in Messiah Yeshua
Practiced a communal meal focused on bread & wine	Practiced a communal meal focused on bread & wine as memorial to Yeshua' death & future return
Salvation by grace of God: to those who keep the Law according to interpretation of the Community	Salvation by grace of God: to those who trust in Yeshua the Messiah, apart from “works of the Law” (though good works are evidence of salvation)
Community of “the New Covenant” living in the last days, expecting the final judgment of God	Community of “the New Covenant,” living in “the last days” (which began with coming of Yeshua), expecting the final judgment with Yeshua as the judge

Founded and led by an anonymous priest called “the Righteous Teacher” or “Teacher of Righteousness” ( <i>moreh hatzedek</i> )	Led by a named descendant of tribe of Judah from Nazareth, who had family ties with priesthood
Followers of the Teacher will be delivered from judgment by God “because of their faith in the Teacher of Righteousness” (Hab. Commentary 8:1)	Followers of the “Rabbi” and “Lord” Yeshua will be delivered from judgment because of their faith in him and his atoning sacrifice for their sins
Waiting for the Davidic Messiah (=Son of David); some may also have looked for a Priestly Messiah	Yeshua is the Messiah, Son of David; also portrayed as the anointed High Priest & Prophet of God
Drew heavily on apocalyptic books in HB, but also other mystical works and nonbiblical texts in Pseudepigrapha	Drew heavily on HB apocalyptic books; some possible allusions to nonbiblical works
Expected final cosmic battle between forces of good and evil; archangel Michael & other angels are their champions	Expected final cosmic battle between forces of good and evil; the resurrected Yeshua is their champion and divine warrior
No belief in the return of the Righteous Teacher	Yeshua, sent by God, would return to judge the unrepentant and set up the Kingdom of God on the new earth

<http://www.hebrew-streams.org/works/qumran/dss-nt.pdf>

### Source Documents

The key documents for information about Qumran beliefs are those thought to have been written by members of the settlement.

- The Rule of the Community (1QS) [originally called “The Manual of Discipline”]
- The Damascus Document (CD or Cairo Damascus)
- The Habakkuk Commentary (*pesher*) (1QpHab)
- The Nahum Commentary (*pesher*) (1QpNah or 4Q169)
- The Commentary on Psalm 37 (4Q171, 4Q173)
- Some Works of the Law (4QMMT or 4Q394–399)

### Summaries of Similarities and Contrasts adapted from:

- William Sanford LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Eerdmans, 1972), 247-54
- Menahem Mansoor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Textbook & Study Guide* (Baker Books, 1983), 154-63
- James Vanderkam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Eerdmans, 1994), 159-85

### English translations and introduction to the Qumran documents

- Florentino García-Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Translation* (2d ed., Eerdmans, 1996)
- Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Penguin, 1997)
- Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Edward Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (Harper, 1996)
- James Vanderkam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance for Understanding the Bible, Judaism, Jesus and Christianity* (Harper, 2002)