

# The Qumran Community: Key Ideas

## Their Community Organization

- based on Teacher of Righteousness and his interpretation of Torah
- entrance process
  - multiple stages
  - progressive admittance into contact with “pure things” (people, meals)
  - instruction & proven obedience
- highly communal
  - meals together
  - property held in common
- strict rules
  - maintenance of purity
  - Sabbath observance
- hierarchical structure
  - order of seating at meals
  - priests (esp. Zadokites) at the head
  - led by the “Instructor” or “Sage” (*Maskil*)
- disciplinary process
  - includes periods of exclusion from contact, community, pure food
- still in ongoing contact with outside world
  - trade and resources

## Their Liturgy

- daily prayers together (twice daily?)
- Sabbath liturgy
- Separate festival celebrations
  - sacrifices?
- annual covenant renewal ceremony

## Their Theology

- same core as most Jews
  - monotheism, temple, torah, covenant & election, new creation
- much like standard “apocalypticism”
  - moral dualism
    - sharp distinction
  - emphasis on Angels
    - esp. Belial/Beliar vs. Michael/Prince of light
  - deterministic tendency
  - cosmic reversal in near future
  - Rome = fourth beast in Daniel 7 (cf. 4 Ezra; Josephus)

- highly sectarian
  - voluntary entrance
  - only members are the “remnant,” members of the “new covenant”
- distinctive language
  - the “mysteries”
  - the “Spirit of Light” and “Spirit of Darkness”
  - the “congregation” or “community” (Heb., *Yachad*)
- temple and priests
  - emphasis on Zadokites as only valid high-priestly line
  - priests as the rightful rulers of the people (after Messiah)
    - even a second, priestly messiah!
  - clear attempt to maintain near-priestly purity in all community life
  - understanding of angels as present constantly with the community
- eschatology
  - human war in which angels participate
  - messiah play key role
    - 2 messiahs? (CD xii.23; xiv.19; xix.10-11; xx.1; 1QS ix.11)

## Their Scriptures

- Read almost all of our OT canon
  - except Esther and Ecclesiastes?
- Emphasized the same books as the NT
  - Isaiah, Gen, Exod, Deut, Psalms, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk
  - though much more emphasis on Leviticus
- Also treated Jubilees as authoritative, as well as perhaps the Book of Enoch and the Temple Scroll (11QT)

## Qumran and the NT

- A copy of a Gospel at Qumran? (7Q5)
- Light/Darkness and John’s Gospel
- Messianic war and the expectations around Jesus
- Torah obedience and controversy over Jesus’/Paul’s approach to law
- Attitudes toward Gentiles
- Voluntary sectarianism (adult entry into remnant/new covenant)