

- b) They sold their properties and gave the money to the community.
- c) The money was given to the apostles to distribute as needed.
- d) Ananias & Saphira lied about their property and received a severe rebuke from Peter.

In the DSS Community Rule the first problem dealt with was property! "If one of them has lied deliberately in matters of property, he shall be excluded from the pure meal of the congregation for one year and shall do penance with respect to 1/4th of his food". Compare this with Ananias and Saphira in Acts 5!

The difference with the early church is that community of goods was not obligatory on all members, but it is difficult not to see the connection with the Essenes since the apostles lived a common life with Jesus during his ministry: Cf. Jn 13:29: "... since Judas had charge of the common fund..."

The Qumran MEBAKKER and the New Testament EPISKOPOS:

- a) In the DSS Community Rule 6 and the Damascus Rule 13 ten members of the community were required for a quorum to form a group. (10 = complete or full).
- b) Both rules appear to require two men to lead each group, one of whom had to be a priest to perform the priestly duties for that group.
- c) The second one was called the Mebakker, whose duty was:
 - To instruct the members and be the arbiter of orthodoxy.
 - He had to interview all who sought admission to the group,
 - He had to teach the Community Rule and the Traditions to those deemed worthy to join them.
 - He was to love the members like a father loved his son.
 - And carry all who were in distress like a shepherd carries his sheep.
 - His obligations and rights are laid down in Damascus Rule 13 & 14.

The literal meaning of Mebakker is overseer. This corresponds exactly to the Greek word Episkopos! It seems that the Essenes gave the bishops of the church their job description!

Eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom: Mt 19:12

- a) It is clear that the ascetic community at the heart of the Essene movement were very conscious of the End Times they were living through at the end of the Mosaic Era.

- b) They specifically went to live in the desert “to prepare the way of the Lord” according to Isaiah 40 because they were certain that the messianic times were coming upon them soon.
- c) Celibacy was very unusual in Judaism. Young people were ‘married off’ soon after puberty. This also happened to Jesus’ Mother, married off by the priests of the temple when she was only 14 years old.
- d) It was a big thing *to choose celibacy*. The prophet Jeremiah lived in End Times for his generation as both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel were conquered and sent out into exile in the 8th and 7th century BC. Jeremiah was a priest who bore witness before Israel during the destruction brought about by Nebuchadnezzar.... Until he was martyred by own unbelieving people in Egypt, having escaped going to Babylon!
- e) The celibate priests in Qumran also bore witness to Israel during some very turbulent events from the time of the revolt of the Maccabees. They prepared for the battle with Kittim (Rome) and many died as martyrs during that time.
- f) Celibacy was also closely connected with ritual purity and the holiness of the temple... and a sign of the eschatological war camp. In OT times celibacy was demanded of men going out to war.
- g) War Rule 7 says: “No boy, or woman shall enter the camps from the time they leave Jerusalem and march out to war until they return. No man who is lame, blind, crippled, or afflicted with a lasting bodily blemish, or smitten with a bodily impurity – none of these shall march out to war with them.... *For the holy angels shall be their hosts.* And there shall be a space of 2,000 cubits between the camps and the place serving as a latrine, so that no indecent nakedness may be seen in the surroundings of the camp.”
- h) This shows the lengths the Essenes went to regarding modesty and purity. Jesus went out of his way to take *the opposite position*: he sought out the poor, blind, lame and leprous and healed them of their troubles – for he came to re-do humanity and restore it to its original design by God in Creation. The OT society was powerless to do this so they excluded them.
- i) Jesus went so far as to take our sins, faults, diseases upon himself in order to save us: 2 Cor 5:21 “For he made him who knew no sin *to be sin for us* that we might become the righteousness of God.”
- j) Just as the Scapegoat on Yom Kippure – the Day of Atonement - had the sins of the people put on it (even though it was undeserving of such punishment), so, on Good Friday (our Day of Atonement) Jesus took our sins upon himself to cleanse and purify

us and re-connect the Human Race with the Divine Presence, so that anyone who wanted it could be saved and re-enter God's Temple and be part of His Kingdom on earth.

- k) This *had to happen* before a redeemed people could be formed and live a life of holiness as ***the New temple of God*** on the earth. Once this happened St. Paul spoke of how to behave in an End Times situation since they were actively passing from the old era of the Mosaic Law to the ***NEW ERA OF GRACE*** under the New Covenant of Jesus, the Messiah.
- l) In 1 Cor 6:19-20 Paul says: "Your body, you know, is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you since you received him from God. You are not your own property. You have been bought and paid for. That is why you should use your body for the glory of God."
- m) Here Paul shifts his listeners onto *the spiritual plane* so that their decisions would be based on spiritual principles.
- n) In 1 Cor ch. 7 when Paul taught on marriage, virginity and celibacy, he was speaking in *the End Times mode* also. In vs 17-24 he tells the Christians "to stay as you are whether married or single" which means that he considered that time was short, so just prepare for what is coming very much like the prophets of today!
- o) In vs. 25-35 Paul spoke of celibacy admitting that this was his own choice and he encourages others to choose this way of life also. The church listened to him, since thousands of men went out into the deserts of Egypt in the early centuries of the church to pray and seek God in troubled times (The Desert Fathers).
- p) They also interceded for the world of the Roman Empire which was trying to destroy the church in its infancy - just as Herod tried to kill Jesus in his infancy! The Jewish king tried to kill the Head of the Mystical Body, and Rome tried to kill the body of that Mystical Head! Both tried to destroy ***the New Temple!*** This points to the satanic source of persecutions against the church.
- q) For the past 2,000 years the church has kept the testimony of celibates alive, both men and women, interceding for the church and the world as we approach the End Times for our own era.
- r) We know that Paul was influenced by the Essenes, but so many of the Essenes entered the church that *they* may have had a great influence on it in this matter.

Divorce in NT & Essene teaching

- Jesus' teaching on divorce in Matthew's Gospel has long challenged scholars. In Mt 5:32, 19:9 Jesus gives an exception clause which allows for divorce: "except for marital unfaithfulness" (NIV); "except sexual immorality" (KJV); "except for the case of fornication" (JB, Douay); "except on the ground of unchastity" (Didache Bible).
- The bible translators are all struggling to give the exact meaning of the Greek word **Porneia**, so, as a result, the church has struggled with whether to allow divorce or not!
- For a married person, the general understanding is that the problem is **adultery**, but the Catholic church found problems with that because it would open the door to marital breakdown, but other Christians have accepted it.
- The DSS have thrown some light on this subject. From the Temple Scroll (11Q T col 57, 16-19) we have sections dealing with laws governing the king (columns 56-59) which deals with Deut 17: 14-20 etc.
- On the question of marriage, it speaks about "He shall not multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away (col 56, 19-19). Later it says in col 57, 15-19 "He shall not take a wife from all the daughters of the Gentiles, but shall take for himself a wife from his father's household (a practice that went back as far as Abraham). He shall have no other wife in addition to her, because she alone shall be with him all the days of her life. If she dies he shall take for himself another from the father's household, from his family."
- There is no doubt here that the king must stay married to the same woman for the whole of her life.... marriage 'until death do us part'. In this text both polygamy and divorce are forbidden. The Pharisees who challenged Jesus in Mark 10: 2 know that this teaching exists, but don't accept the teaching of the Essenes!
- Jesus' answer to them in this case is to go back to Creation and God's original purpose in making us male and female (Gen 1-2). Both Jesus and the Essenes went right back **to God's original plan** to give instructions on how to behave, since God is outside of time, 'the same yesterday, today and forever'.
- The addition given by Jesus *which shocked even the apostles*, was that men and women are equal in God's Eyes! The Jews only ever discussed a man divorcing his wife, but Jesus said in Mk 2:10-12 "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery." Jesus must have been thinking about future times because it was unthinkable for a woman to divorce in his day!

God's Dwelling Place on the Earth

Introduction: A simple question regarding the purity rituals of the Essenes sent me on a mighty search for the reply. The question was Why?

- I'm going to take you on a tour of the Bible to answer that question, but first, the Essenes were priests who had abandoned the temple in Jerusalem to form a spiritual temple in the wilderness.
- They were very conscious of the sinfulness of human nature, and therefore our unworthiness to even enter into the Presence of the All Holy God.
- They had laws from Leviticus regarding the ablutions which priests must go through before entering the Tabernacle, so these laws were followed meticulously. We need to look at the mystery of the temple to understand this.

First, a quick summary of the great theme running through the scriptures:

- a) Gen 1-2: God and "Adam" (Man = Humanity) in loving union. God reigns with Adam on earth.
- b) Gen 3: Sin destroys this union, with horrific consequences.
- c) Gen 4: God searched for Adam: "Adam, where are you?", but **A was hiding from God**. He was then excommunicated from Eden. He could no longer go into the Presence of the All Holy One.
- d) This was followed by 4,000 years of hell on earth since Humanity had lost The Way to God.
- e) On Calvary, the *Last Adam* during 3 hours of "darkness over the whole land" cried out to God, the Father: "My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?" He was there making reparation for the sins of humanity (Adam), and paying the price to reunite God and Adam again. **This time God was hiding from Adam** even though he had a temple and purification rituals and sacrifices to try and get access to God again!
- f) In the meantime, Jesus had shown The Way back to God for Adam to take: Jn 14:6

- g) Revelation 21: After *a lot of cleansing* Eden is restored. God and Adam live together in loving union reigning over the earth – which was God’s plan from the beginning.
- h) The **restoration of Eden** runs throughout the scriptures. Before Christ, the Presence of God was confined to the temple in Jerusalem. After Christ the Presence is everywhere in the heart of Adam.

Here is the extraordinary plan of God for the earth: **“On earth as it is in Heaven”**

The Cosmic Temple: Consists of 3 sections:

Heaven: God’s own Dwelling Place

The heavens (above us): the abode of angels and demons: the Unseen realm of Creation. The spiritual ministers of God’s Throne who carry out His wishes. Cf. Apocalypse. **The Upper Family of God.**

The earth below: The abode of Humans, **the Lower Family of God,** those who aspire to enter into Heaven permanently.

Isaiah 66:1-2: **“With Heaven my throne and earth my footstool what house could you build for me? What place could you make for my rest?”**

Isaiah 63:15: **“Look down from heaven, look down from your holy and glorious dwelling....”**

Isaiah 64:1-2: **“Oh that you would tear open the heavens and come down. At your Presence the mountains would melt as fire sets brushwood alight... to make the nations tremble at your Presence.”**

First Attempt at bringing Heaven down to earth

The Garden of Eden: also had 3 sections:

God’s Throne: This is the site of God’s Presence

Keruvim: Abode of angels who protect the Throne of God, and carry out His orders.

Adam and Eve: Creatures called to be at home with God and His angelic court, living from **the Tree of Life** which contained all the knowledge needed to reach the Cosmic Temple.

Second Attempt

Tabernacle in the Wilderness: also had 3 sections

Holy of Holies: The place of God's Presence/ His Throne on the Ark of the Covenant

The Holy Place: The place where priests serve God *as human angels*, messengers of God carrying out His Divine Will on behalf of the People of God.

The Outer Court: The place for the people seeking union with God: **God's earthly family**.

Third Attempt:

Solomon's Temple 9th Century BC: (first temple) also had 3 sections, as in the Tabernacle.

Fourth Attempt: **The Second Temple**: The same as the Tabernacle: this was time of the DSS.

Herod's temple: (**not counted**). **This was the time of Christ**. It had the 3 sections also but he added to the Outer Court: The Outer Court was expanded to include the Court of the men of Israel; the Court of the women of Israel and **the court of the Gentiles**! This may have been an unconscious anticipation of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Kingdom of God through Jesus, the Messiah as the prophets had foretold.