

**Excerpt from Prof. Chávez's "A Theological Introduction to the Christian Bible" [pp. 103-104]**

Let us again look at 11Q Melchizedek, the remarkable Qumran document we briefly discussed above. This will give us the opportunity to get a good glimpse of this Jewish sect's expectations for the End Time of "salvation" (I place this word in quotation marks because it is mostly a Christian word now and might lead one to impose foreign categories on Jewish ideas). The fragments which have been published stress the Jubilee "release" of all debts; here "release" (*s<sup>e</sup>mittah*) comes from Deut 15:2, though Lev 25:13 (regarding the Jubilee) is also quoted. The Qumranites viewed Sacred Scripture as referring to their own days (like the early Christians did); the particular Qumranite commentary (or midrash) on Scripture, applying it to their own time, is called *pesher* (interpretation). This is their commentary here:

for G[od]. Its interpretation] for the last days refers to the captives, who [. . .] and whose teachers have been hidden and kept secret, and from the inheritance of Melchizedek, fo[r . . .] . . . and they are the inherita[nce of Melchize]dek, who will make them return. And liberty will be proclaimed for them, to free them from [the debt of] all their iniquities. And this [wil]l [happen] in the first week of the jubilee which follows the ni[ne] jubilees. And the d[ay of aton]ement is the e[nd of] the tenth [ju]bilee in which atonement shall be made for all the sons of [light and] for the men [of] the lot of Mel[chi]zedek. [. . .] over [the]m . . . [. . .] accor[ding to] a[ll] their [wor]ks, for it is the time for the «year of grace» of Melchizedek . . .<sup>1</sup>

Note the following. Various Hebrew Bible passages are interpreted as referring to the End Time. The whole tenor of the passage is that "liberty" (the *d<sup>e</sup>ror* of Lev 25:10 and Isa 61:1) will be proclaimed to the "captives," from the verb *shuv*. This "liberty" (release from debts, slavery, captivity, etc.) takes on the form also of forgiveness of sins, in the context of the Day of Atonement (on which the Jubilee is to take place, Lev 25:9). It will be on the tenth Jubilee, that is, after 49 x 10 years, or on the 490<sup>th</sup> year, as in Dan 9. This is called the "year of grace," as in Isa 61:2 (quoted by Jesus in Luke 4:17-21). The Qumran text further on also explicitly refers to "the messenger who proclaims peace, who

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<sup>1</sup> *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition. Volume 2 (4Q274-11Q31)* (F. García Martínez – E.J.C. Tigchelaar, eds.; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill; Grand Rapids – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1997), 1207. The last three dots are mine (I stopped quoting); the other dots are in the text. The brackets indicate *lacunae* (gaps) and the conjectured restoration of the passage. I have omitted the verse numbers found in this edition.

brings good news, who proclaims salvation,” of Isa 52:7, and interprets this messenger as “the Anointed one of the spirit, concerning whom Dan[iel] said, [Until an anointed one, a prince (Dan. ix, 25)] . . . .”<sup>2</sup>

There is also in Qumran the notion of an eschatological high priest who will expiate sins. This is found in a text which is similar to an intertestamental work known as the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, and specifically, the Testament of Levi. Rabbi Baumgartner describes the figure in the Qumran passage, after briefly quoting from the passage, thus:

“His word is like the word of the heavens, and his teaching according to the will of God. His sun will illumine the world and his fire will burn to all the ends of the earth.” Despite this glorification, he is depicted as the object of rejection and calumny on the part of his antagonists, much like the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. Yet, he is to atone for all the children of his generation . . .

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The claim that [to atone for] always refers to ritual expiation is contradicted by the occasional usage in both biblical and Qumran usage of this phrase for divine forgiveness. Moreover, even if we take [*kipper*] in the sense of expiation, the allusion to the hostile disparagement suffered by the priest suggests that like the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:10) his humiliation was itself considered to constitute an [*asham*], a guilt offering for the sins of his generation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This quotation I took from VERMES, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 501, omitting his italics. The “Anointed of the spirit” is a reference to Isa 61:1. Cf. Acts 10:38.

<sup>3</sup> BAUMGARTNER, “Messianic Forgiveness,” 540. I omitted two footnotes, the Hebrew text at the end of the first paragraph, and transliterated the Hebrew words and placed them in brackets. The asterisks denote that I skipped part of the text I was quoting from.