

**The Dead Sea Scrolls**  
**Shedding New Light on the Scriptures and the Church**  
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*(The first five minutes of the talk cover pages 1-6 of this handout)*

**Introduction:**

**The Site and Location where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947:**  
Map of Judea:



Qumran in its greater geographical context. (Map by Jeff Jolley.)

Map showing the elevations and topography:



The cliffs and caves at Qumran:



Close-up of the Mouth of One of the Caves:



Overview of the Site of Qumran,  
with remains of the “monastery” that once stood there:



Qumran, Looking to the South:





Interior of the Ruins:



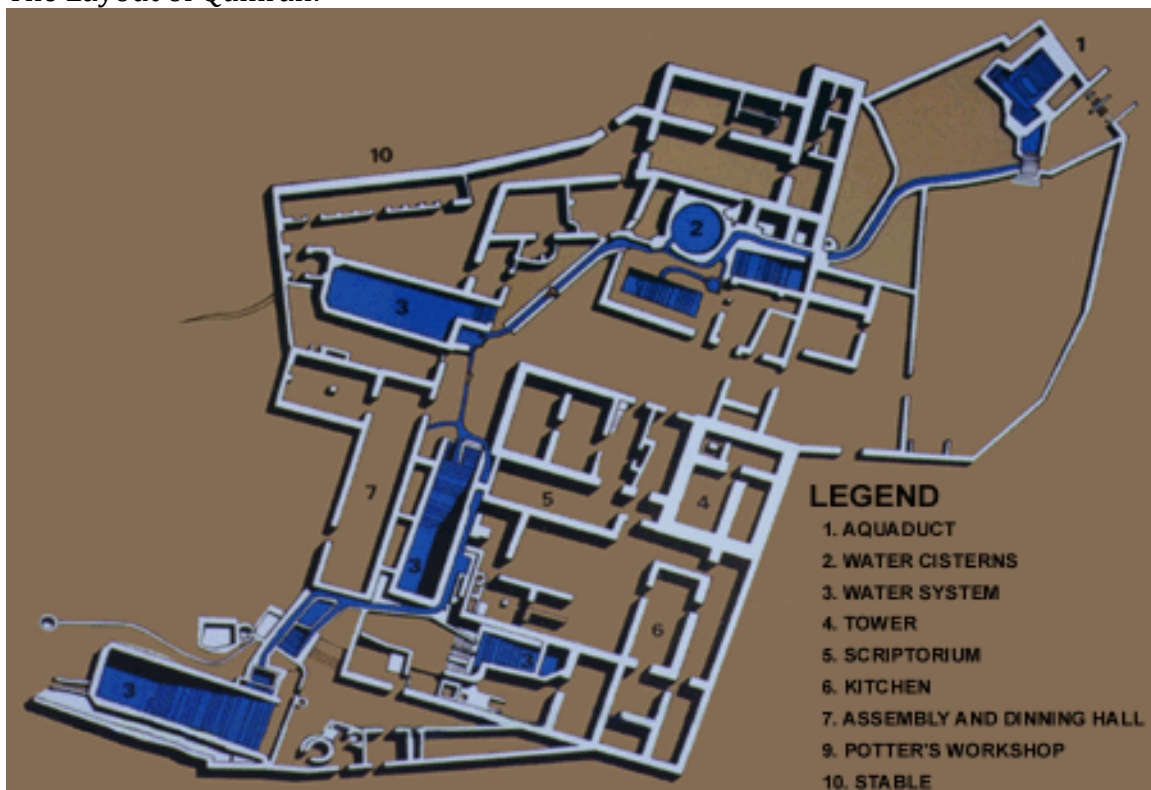
Ritual Bath:



## Aqueduct at Qumran:



## The Layout of Qumran:





## Some of the Most Famous Dead Sea Scrolls:

The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaiah<sup>a</sup>) (One of the first and most famous of the scrolls):



11QPsalms<sup>a</sup>: This Scroll contained most of the psalms in our Book of the Psalms, although in a different order, plus additional ones not previously known



The War Scroll: This fragmentary scroll described the final battle before the dawn of the age to come. The Qumranites (members of the sect at Qumran) believed they would play an important role in this battle. Here is one of the larger fragments:



Fragments of the Community Rule (1QSerek ha-Yahad or 1QS): This “Rule” was a document governing the communal life of the Qumranites, similar in concept to the Rule of St. Benedict and other monastic rules. In addition to a nearly complete copy from Cave 1, other fragmentary copies were found in Cave 4:



## Summary of the manuscripts (hand-written documents found at Qumran)

- Total manuscripts: around 800–1000 (The Shrine of the Book in Israel now puts the number at 971. Scholars have differed on the proper counting of the manuscripts.)
- *Biblical books*: around 200-220; the remainder consist of:
- *Parabiblical Texts*: paraphrases of Scripture, pseudepigraphal/apocryphal books
- *Liturgical Texts*:
- *Calendrical Texts*
- *Community Rules*
- *Legal Texts*
- *Commentaries*

## Why are the Dead Sea Scrolls important? (about 5 minutes into talk<sup>1</sup>)

They are important for:

1. The TEXT of Scripture
2. The CANON of Scripture
3. The INTERPRETATION of Scripture
4. The BACKGROUND of Christian Faith and Practice.

## I. The TEXT of Scripture and the Dead Sea Scrolls

• Before the discoveries at Qumran, these were our main sources for the text of the Old Testament:

- Masoretic Text (MT) (Standard Hebrew text of the Old Testament)
  - Oldest extant copies late tenth cent. AD (around AD 1000)
- Septuagint (LXX) (Ancient Greek translation of OT used by Apostles)
  - trans. 250 BC
  - Oldest extant copies late 4th cent. AD
- Vulgate (St. Jerome's Latin translation, official Catholic version of Bible)
  - trans. late 300's, early 400's AD
  - Oldest complete copy 8th cent. AD

• The discoveries at Qumran:

- Gave us large chunks of Hebrew text from as early as the *second century BC!*  
That's 1,200 years earlier than most our known manuscripts
- **Changed the view of the LXX, the Bible of the early Church**  
*The LXX turned out to be a faithful translation of Hebrew Bible texts that were slightly different than the ones that ended up in the standard Jewish Bibles (that is, the Masoretic Text)*  
*The Church's ancient Bible translation was better than realized.*
- Generally confirmed the accuracy of transmission of the Bible over time

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<sup>1</sup> The time indications are from the start of the 60 min. talk. If your playback device counts from the Lighthouse intro, you may need to add 4 min. to these figures.

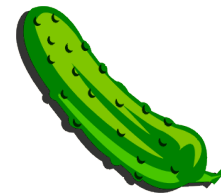
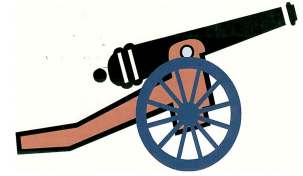


–Gave us pieces of Deuterocanonical Books in the original languages (Hebrew or Aramaic)

*For example, rare passages in the original language from Tobit and some of Sirach*

## II. The CANON of Scripture (about 10 minutes into talk)

- The *canon* of Scripture refers to the *list of inspired books*.
- **One claim often made by Protestants is that the Jewish canon of today (=Protestant Old Testament) is identical to the canon of Jesus' day.**
- The Qumran evidence points to a larger canon for many Jews
  - The Qumranites probably considered the books of *Jubilees*, *1 Enoch*, and *The Temple Scroll* as part of the Bible, and perhaps Tobit and Sirach as well.
- There was no consensus on the “canon” in Jesus' day
  - Sadducees: Only 5 Books of Moses (Genesis-Deuteronomy)
  - Pharisees: Roughly the modern Jewish Bible/Protestant OT (but not exactly the same)
  - Essenes: Pharisees canon + many other books
- Without a consensus, there is a need for a divine authority, an infallible authority to make a decision!
- With all affection for Jews and Protestants, the canon *does* pose a theological “pickle” for them:
  - The canon is not part of revealed Scripture itself, and there was no consensus about it in ancient times
  - Neither Jews nor Protestants have any authoritative person or body to decide such a fundamental issue for the entire people of God
  - Catholics believe God gave infallible religious authority to Peter and the Apostles, passed down to their successors:
    - Jesus to Peter: “*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*” (Matt. 16:19)
    - Jesus to the Disciples: “*Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*” (Matt. 18:18)
    - “Binding” and “loosing” are technical terms for making official decisions about religious law, which the Jews call *Halakhah*
    - Jesus to the Disciples: “*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth*” (John 16:13)
    - » See Catechism §891
    - » Web resource on Church Councils and Scripture:  
<http://www.catholicapologetics.org/ap031100.htm>





—Without an infallible Church, you end up with an “infallible Bible” but no infallible list of what books belong in the Bible (in other words, no infallible *canon*)

### **III. The INTERPRETATION and BACKGROUND of Scripture:**

#### **Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls** (about 15 minutes in to talk)

- There were three major sects of Judaism

»Reference: *Autobiography of Flavius Josephus* §2:10 (=Josephus, *Life*, 2:10)

1. Sadducees

2. Pharisees

- › St. Paul was a Pharisee

3. Essenes

- › The Qumranites were Essenes

»Reference: *James C. VanderKam, The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*  
(*Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994*): 71-98.

- The Sadducees

- Wealthy elite

- Controlled the Temple

- Only accepted the Five Books of Moses as canonical

- No afterlife or spiritual world (Matt 22:23-28; Acts 23:8)

- Not popular with other Jews

- Collaborated with the Romans to keep their power

- Allowed the Romans to appoint the High Priest every year (John 11:49)

- The Pharisees

- Very influential with the common people

- Had a message or program for regular Jews

- Accepted “The Law, Prophets, and Writings” as inspired (=modern Jewish Bible, roughly)

- Tried to get everyone live by (almost) priestly purity

- Believed in afterlife and spiritual world (Acts 23:8)

- Developed into modern (“rabbinic”) Judaism

- Remember some Pharisees were admirable: Mark 12:34

- The Essenes

- Stressed personal holiness/asceticism

- Practiced celibacy

- Accepted lots of inspired books

- Respected for their holiness

- Kept to themselves

- Expected the Messiah(s) soon; Aaronic and Davidic; Jer. 33

- Regarded the Temple as defiled

»Reference: *Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Bk. 2, Ch. 8, Par. 2, and thereafter*  
(=Josephus, *War* 2:119 and following)

See <http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/war-2.htm>

• **The Dead Sea Scrolls shed light on at least two aspects of Paul's writings:** (about 23 minutes into talk)

1. Soteriology (his teaching on salvation)
2. Ecclesiology (his teaching on the Church)

• First, Paul's Soteriology:

Gal. 2:16: *Yet who know that a man is not justified by <sup>1</sup>works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by <sup>2</sup>works of the law, because by <sup>3</sup>works of the law shall no one be justified*

—Catholics and Protestants disagree on Paul's "works of the law"

›Classic Protestants: "Works of the Law" are good works, indeed, any human effort to obey God

›Classic Catholic response: "Works of the Law" means obedience to the Old Covenant (Moses' Covenant), *especially its rituals*

›St. Thomas calls these rituals the *ceremonial law*: circumcision, ritual washings, etc.

—Whose right? Enter "4QMMT" as Evidence

• 4QMMT: "Miqtsat Ma'asei ha-Torah" (about 25 minutes in)

— "Precepts of the Works of the Law"

—A letter from the Essenes to the Pharisees about ritual purity

—The only use of the phrase "works of the law" outside of Paul in ancient literature

—The end of 4QMMT reads:

*Now, we have written to you some of the works of the Law, those which we determined would be beneficial for you and your people, because we have seen that you possess insight and knowledge of the Law. Understand all these things and beseech Him to set your counsel straight and so keep you away from evil thoughts and the counsel of Belial. Then you shall rejoice at the end time when you find the essence of our words to be true. And it will be reckoned to you as righteousness, in that you have done what is right and good before Him, to your own benefit and to that of Israel*

• What are the "Works of the Law" listed by the Essenes in 4QMMT?

*A partial list:*

—(1) Purity of liquids poured from one container to another

—(2) Impurity of bones and animal hides

—(3) Dogs in Jerusalem (this was a big No-No!)

—(4) Skin diseases

—(5) Keeping away from Gentiles

—(6) Keeping blind and deaf people out of the Temple



- “Works of the Law” in 4QMMT means ritual law, not good works!
- The Implications:
  - The Catholic position seems vindicated: “Works of the Law” seems to be a phrase or idiom for the cultic and ritual observances of the Mosaic law, not a reference to good words in general, much less works of mercy.
- **Second, Paul’s Ecclesiology** (about 30 minutes into talk)
  - The Problem: Paul’s teaching on the Church, especially in Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles (1&2 Timothy and Titus), is “too developed.”
  - For that reason, many scholars dispute Paul’s authorship of these books.

>>Reference: Bo Reicke, Re-Examining Paul’s Letters: The History of the Pauline Corpus (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), pp. 52-56
- Is Paul’s View of the Church “Too Developed?”
  - What Paul says about the Church has many parallels with what the Qumranites said about their community
  - Here is a list of striking quotes from the “Community Rule,” the document that described and governed life for the men at Qumran:

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### Excerpts from The Community Rule<sup>2</sup> (1QS=1QSerek ha-Yahad)

*The language of the Community Rule sometimes sounds like St. John the Evangelist:*  
1QS 1:9 “He [the supervisor of the community] is to teach them both to love all the Children of Light ...”

*The rules for initiating a person into the community included a three-year process:*  
1QS 1:16 “All who enter the Yahad’s Rule shall be initiated into the Covenant before God, agreeing to act 17 according to all that He has commanded and not to backslide because of any fear, terror or persecution 18 that may occur during the time of Belial’s dominion.”

*If a person backslid after joining they were excommunicated:*  
1QS 2:16 “He shall be cut off from all the Sons of Light because of his apostasy ...”

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<sup>2</sup> The English translation of these excerpts is based on that of Dr. Peter Flint, provided with the Accordance™ Bible software package from Oaksoft™ Inc., used here according to “fair use” law. The numbering system (e.g. 1:1) refers not to chapter and verse, but to column and line of the text.

*The Community had clear office holders, analogous to bishops, priests, deacons:*

1QS 2:19 They shall do as follows annually, all the days of Belial's dominion: the priests shall pass in review 20 first, ranked according to their spiritual excellence, one after another. Then the Levites shall follow, 21 and third all the people by rank, one after another, in their thousands and hundreds 22 and fifties and tens. Thus shall each Israelite know his proper standing in the Yahad of God, 23 an eternal society. None shall be demoted from his appointed place, none promoted beyond his foreordained rank.

*The Holy Spirit active in the community is the only final means for forgiveness of sin:*

1QS 3:6 "For only through the spirit pervading God's true society can there be atonement for a man's ways, all 7 of his iniquities; thus only can he gaze upon the light of life and so be joined to His truth by His holy spirit, purified from all 8 iniquity."

*Observe the connection between the Holy Spirit and sprinkling of water:*

1QS 4:20. By His truth God shall then purify all human deeds, and refine some of humanity so as to extinguish every perverse spirit from the inward parts 21 of the flesh, cleansing from every wicked deed by a holy spirit. Like purifying waters, He shall sprinkle each with a spirit of truth, effectual against all the abominations of lying and sullyng by an 22 unclean spirit.

*Through the Holy Spirit, one is restored to Adam's pre-fall justice or "glory":*

1QS 4:22 Indeed, God has chosen them for an eternal covenant; 23 all the glory of Adam shall be theirs alone.

*The Qumran Community celebrated a sacred meal together daily:*

1QS 6:4 [At the sacred meal,] "The men shall sit before the priest by rank, and in that manner their opinions will be sought on any matter. When the table has been set for eating or the new wine readied 5 for drinking, it is the priest who shall stretch out his hand first, blessing the first portion of the bread or the new wine."

*The Community was ruled by an "overseer" (Hebrew *mebaqqer*, which in Greek would be *episkopos*, from which we get the English *bishop*):*

1QS 6: 11 ...During the session of the general membership no man should say anything except by the permission of the general membership, or more particularly, of the man 12 who is the Overseer of the general membership.

*The process of joining the membership took time, especially before one could share the meal. Speaking of a prospective member, it says:*

1QS 6:16 "If he does proceed in joining the party of the Yahad, he must not touch the pure food 17 of the general membership before they have examined him as to his spiritual fitness and works, and not before a full year has passed."

*The penalty for offending the whole community was to be barred from the common meal:*



1QS 6:24 These are the rules by which cases are to be decided at a community inquiry. If there be found among them a man who has lied 25 about money and done so knowingly, they shall bar him from the pure meals of the general membership for one year ...

*The Community had a theology of “redemptive suffering”:*

1QS 8:3 They are to preserve faith in the land with self-control and a broken spirit, atoning for sin by working justice and 4 suffering affliction.

Compare St. Paul:

Romans 8:15 ...When we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. 18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

*Finally, look at the parallel between Jesus’ healings with “spit” and “mud” and this final line from the Community Rule:*

1QS 11: 20 Who can Your glory measure? Who, indeed, is man among Your glorious works? 21 As what can he, born of a woman, be reckoned before You? Kneaded from dust, his body is but the bread of worms; he is so much spit, 22 mere nipped-off clay—and for clay his longing. Shall clay contest, the vessel plumb counsel?

Compare John 9:6-7:

6 As he said this, [Jesus] spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man’s eyes with the clay, 7 saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

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• **Similarities Between the Church and Qumran** (about 40 min. in)

- Presence of the Holy Spirit
- Sacred meal of bread and wine
- Water for atonement
- The community is a Temple
- The restoration of the Adamic privileges
- Threefold hierarchy for governing the community

• Does this undermine Christianity?

- Some claim it does
- But the Christian faith has always said, “We are the fulfillment of the Old Testament.” Look at these quotes:

•**Rom. 1:1** Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God **2** which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy **scriptures**, **3** the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ...

•**Rom. 15:4** For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the **scriptures** we might have hope.

•**1Cor. 15:3** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the **scriptures**, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the **scriptures**, **5** and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve ....

- In a sense, Qumran confirms the Church's faith
  - Faithful Jews (Essenes) could read the Scriptures and accurately foresee many of things about the New Covenant community of God
  - Why else would Jesus rebuke the disciples for not understanding his teaching, unless it was possible to understand Jesus' message in light of the Old Testament?

#### **IV. The INTERPRETATION and BACKGROUND of Scripture:**

##### **The Dead Sea Scrolls and John (43 minutes into talk)**

- There are interesting connections between John and Qumran
  - One connection between the Gospel of John and Qumran is John the Baptist
  - *John 1:35 The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; 36 and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38 Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.*
  - It may be that the unnamed second disciple here might be the author of the Gospel, in other words, John the Apostle.
- Celibacy is a major connection between New Testament and Qumran:
  - *Rev. 14:4 It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes;*



- *(Matt. 19:12 For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.)*
- Another “Rule” at Qumran, similar to the Community Rule and called “The Damascus Document”, states the following:
  - *7:4” In short, for all who conduct their lives 5 by these laws, in **perfect holiness**, according to all the instructions, God’s covenant stands firm 6 to give them life for thousands of generations. **BUT if they live in camps according to the rule of the land and marry 7 women and beget children**, then let them live in accordance with the Law, and by the ordinance”*
  - For the Essenes, “perfect holiness” was to abstain from marriage and begetting children, in other words, celibacy.
- **John, Qumran, and the Dating of the Passover** (about 48 min. in)
  - Compare these accounts:
    - *John 12:1 **Six days** before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.*
    - *Mark 14:1 It was now **two days** before the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth, and kill him;*
  - **Is this an error in Scripture?**
    - *Luke 22:10 He said to them, “Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house which he enters*
    - This was women’s work! See John 4:7
  - Apparent conflict of date of Passover:
  - **Mark 14:12** *And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they celebrate the passover, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the passover?”*
  - **John 19:13** *When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The*

*Pavement, and in Hebrew, Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about the sixth hour ...*

- *Scholarly reference: J. Bonsirven, 'Hora Talmudica: La notion chronologique de Jean 19, 14, aurait-elle un sens symbolique?', Biblica 33 (1952), pp. 511-15.*
- Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, John was dismissed as unhistorical.
- With the discovery, the mystery began to unravel:
- *The Essenes had a different calendar!*
  - **4Q252 2:2** *That day Noah went out from the ark, at the end of an exact year, 3 three hundred and sixty four days,*
  - **4Q394 f3\_7i:1 (A19)** *[On the twenty-eighth of the month is] a Sabbath. The month continues with the day after [the ]S[abbath (Sunday), the second day, and an [addi]tion [of the third day.] The year is complete: three hundred si[xty-four] days...*
- This is what we know about the Essenes:
  - They lived in celibate community
  - Essene Passover was always on a Tuesday
  - They celebrated without a Lamb (because the temple was defiled and it was the only place to sacrifice)
  - The traditional site of the Upper Room is in the ancient Essene quarter of Jerusalem
    - *Scholarly reference on this whole hypothesis: Annie Jaubert, The Date of the Last Supper: The Biblical Calendar and Christian Liturgy (Alba House, 1965)*
- Jesus may have celebrated the Last Supper on a Tuesday with the Essenes (The Holy Triduum compresses Jesus Passion for liturgical reasons)
- He died on Friday while the lambs were being sacrificed for the Temple Passover on Saturday
- The Gospel of John is not just making up nice fiction concerning the time of Jesus death
- Pope Benedict XVI has been open to this theory. See his remarks from April 6, 2007:  
<http://209.157.64.200/focus/religion/1813431/posts>