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# The Messiah – In the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls



Written by Robert C. Jones  
Acworth, Georgia

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# Christian Theology and History Adult Sunday School Courses

Robert Jones

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I've always been a strong believer in adult Sunday School classes and Bible studies in our churches. And many churches have quality, Biblically-based adult-focused programs. Unfortunately, just as many churches tend to downplay adult education, focusing on children's education (not a bad thing in itself), or focusing on the needs of the "unchurched", where topics such as church history and theology are often purposely ignored.

Yet there is a strong need for adult education focused on both the Bible and the basic tenets and history of the Faith. Among the reasons:

- Not all adults come from a strong childhood background in the church – adult Sunday School classes/Bible studies may be their first serious introduction to what Christianity is all about
- Christianity (and especially Evangelical Christianity) is under constant attack from the media and popular culture (movies, music, etc.). We need to give fellow Christians the tools to defend the Faith against attack (or to provide a "ready defense" as Peter says in 1 Peter 3:15)
- Even adult Christians that have a strong Biblical background often know little about the origins and history of their Faith

To better meet the needs of adult Christians (both those mature in their Faith, and those just starting out in the "School of Christ"), I've written a series of courses that focus on the history of the Christian Church (including the Jewish roots), as well as the development of doctrine in the Church. The topics represented in these courses are intended to both further the participant's walk in the Faith, as well as serve as a starting point for Christian apologetics.

While the primary purpose of these courses is for use in churches, they also may be useful for High School and College projects, especially the courses focused primarily on historical aspects.

One note: these courses are primarily written from an Evangelical Protestant viewpoint (I come from a Reformed Church background), but I hope I've given ample time to other points of view throughout the various courses.

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## Introduction

The Old Testament, the Apocrypha and the Dead Sea Scrolls contain prophecies of a coming messiah. Christians believe that this messiah has already come (and will come again) – Jesus Christ. Also, Christians believe that the Messiah – Jesus – is divine, the very Son of God. Using the three aforementioned sources, a strong case can be made (as was made by the Gospel writers) that Jesus was/is the promised messiah.



In this course, we'll examine many of the more well-known messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, and in other Second Temple Judaism sources, and show how they intersect with the Christian concept of the messiah. We'll also make a few observations on the tricky question of what kind of messiah the Jews of Jesus' period were expecting. Many Bible commentaries written before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls state that the Jews of Jesus' time were looking for a warrior/king messiah that would lead them out of subjugation by the Romans. The Dead Sea Scrolls seem to paint quite a different picture of what the coming messiah would be like – a picture must more like the Christian image of the messiah.

## Quiz

1. T/F *Messiah* is a Greek word meaning “anointed one”
2. T/F Most Christians and Jews are united in their respective interpretations of the “suffering servant” passages in Isaiah
3. T/F All messianic prophecies in the Old Testament refer to the First Coming of Christ
4. T/F There are no references in the Old Testament to a divine messiah
5. T/F According to the book of Genesis, the messiah will be descended from the tribe of Judah
6. T/F *Christ* was the family name of Jesus' father, Joseph
7. T/F In the Apocrypha, Judas Maccabeus is presented as the messiah
8. T/F No Second Temple Judaism writings refer to a “Son of God”
9. T/F According to the Old Testament, the messiah will receive his priestly authority from the Levites
10. T/F According to the Old Testament, the messiah will bring salvation to the Gentiles

## Nomenclature

*Messiah* comes from a Hebrew word meaning “anointed one”. In Greek, the word was translated as *Christos*, hence the nomenclature “Jesus the Christ”. In Judaism and Christianity, the term has a special meaning, which we will explore in this course. (Note: In the Old Testament, prominent officials were anointed – Samuel, for example, anointed both Saul and David.)



## Old Testament


The main source of prophecy foretelling the coming of Jesus is found, of course, in the Old Testament. By some estimates, there are over 300 messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. In this section, we'll examine some of the more well known ones.


For many Christians, the paramount importance of the Old Testament is as a foundation for the new. The coming of Jesus is foretold in the Old Testament, and realized in the New.

### *Historical books*

While messianic prophecy is sparse in the Old Testament historical books, there are some key references. We learn that the messiah will:

- Come out of Judah
- Battle with Satan (the serpent)
- Will have both priestly and kingly roles
- Will be a latter day Moses.

Reference	Notes
Genesis 3:14-15	<p>"...he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Many people view that this is the first Messianic prophecy in the Bible, viewing that the "he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" verse is referring to the death of Jesus on the cross and the ultimate victory of Christ over Satan.</li> </ul> 
Genesis 49:10	<p>"The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The first indication in the Bible that the Messiah will come from the tribe of Judah (the tribe of Jesus)</li> </ul>
Numbers 24:17	<p>"A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This verbiage was connected with the messiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls</li> </ul>
Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19	<p>"I will raise up for them a prophet like you [Moses] from among their brothers..."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The role of this foretold prophet was associated with Jesus – see John 6:14, John 7:40, Acts 3:22-23</li> </ul>

Reference	Notes
	
1 Samuel 2:35	<p>“I will raise up for myself a faithful priest...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The role of Jesus as a great priest is discussed in Hebrews</li> </ul>

### ***The Psalms and Job***

While we often think of the Psalms as being comprised primarily of praise songs, there is actually a great deal of messianic prophecy contained within. We learn (in addition to the characteristics already listed in the historical books):

- The messiah will be a Redeemer, and will live on earth
- The messiah is God’s son; the messiah is divine
- The messiah will suffer at the hands of his detractors
- The priestly authority of the messiah is through the order of Melchizedek – not through the Levites
- The messiah will be rejected by some of his own people

Reference	Notes
Job 19:25	<p>“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The messiah as an incarnate redeemer</li> </ul>
Psalms 2	<p>““You are my Son; today I have become your Father.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In this chapter of Psalms, we see many of the elements of messianic prophecy from a Christian standpoint – the messiah as a king, as the anointed one, as a son of God</li> <li>▪ Some translations don’t capitalize “Son” and “Anointed One”</li> </ul>
Psalms 22:1,16,18	<p>“...they have pierced my hands and my feet”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Psalms 22 contains several messianic allusions that have New Testament counterparts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Verse one contains words that Jesus speaks from the cross (Matt 27:46)</li> <li>▪ Verse 16 refers to the piercing of the hands and feet (Jesus was, of course, crucified)</li> <li>▪ Verse 18: “They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Reference	Notes
	clothing" (John 19:24)
Psalms 118:22	<p>"The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone..."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jesus quotes this verse in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matt 21:42, Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17) and the verse is quoted in reference to Jesus in Acts 4:11 and 1 Peter 2:7</li> </ul>
Psalms 110:1-4	<p>"The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet..."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verse 1 is perhaps the clearest indication in the Old Testament of a divine messiah – Jesus quotes it in Luke 20:41-44; Peter also refers to this verse in Acts 2:29-36</li> <li>Verses 2-4 note that a single messiah will have the attributes of both king ("The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion..." and high priest ("You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.") Note that this priesthood is not passed down through the Levitical line, but rather through the older line of the mysterious Melchizedek (see Hebrews 7, for example)</li> </ul>


### ***The prophets***


The major and minor prophets provide a veritable cornucopia of messianic references, and introduce the elements of an end times messiah. Messianic characteristics of the messiah introduced in the prophets include:


- The messiah will be the final judge (and thus will be part of the end times)
- The messiah will bring peace to believers and a sword to nonbelievers
- The messiah will usher in a new era of peace and tranquility
- The divine messiah will become incarnate, born of a virgin (or a young woman)
- He will reign on David's throne forever
- He will be preceded by a messenger (Elijah, according to Malachi)
- He will bring salvation to the Gentiles
- He will bear the sins of many (and will be severely persecuted for his efforts)
- He will perform miracles
- He existed before becoming incarnate
- He will be present at the end times
- He will come up out of Egypt

Reference	Notes
Isaiah 2:2-4	<p>"They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks..."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Similar to the description of the New</li> </ul>




Reference	Notes
	Heaven, the New Earth, and the New Jerusalem in Rev 21
Isaiah 4:2-4	<p data-bbox="678 296 1174 352">“In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 359 1174 422">▪ Isaiah introduces the metaphor of the messiah as a Branch</li> <li data-bbox="678 428 1174 491">▪ The messiah will come with “spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="727 497 1174 560">▪ Jesus as the final judge is discussed in Rev 20:11-15</li> <li data-bbox="727 567 1174 615">▪ Jesus baptizes with the Spirit and with Fire (Matt 3:11)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Isaiah 7:14	<p data-bbox="678 621 1174 678">“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 684 1174 783">▪ Another sign of an God-incarnate messiah – Immanuel means “God with us” (see also Matt 1:23)</li> <li data-bbox="678 789 1174 909">▪ Some scholars contend that “virgin” should be translated as “young women” – which doesn’t change the fact of God becoming incarnate on earth</li> </ul> 
Isaiah 9:1-7	<p data-bbox="678 1129 1174 1228">“And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 1234 1174 1297">▪ Another strong indication of a divine, incarnate messiah</li> <li data-bbox="678 1304 1174 1417">▪ These verses can’t be talking about an earthly king who lives and dies, because he will “reign on David’s throne... from that time on and forever”</li> </ul>
Isaiah 11:1-10	<p data-bbox="678 1423 1174 1522">“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 1528 1174 1591">▪ The messiah will come from Judah (Jesse was the father of King David)</li> <li data-bbox="678 1598 1174 1774">▪ While the messiah will be stern in rooting out unrighteousness (“with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked”), ultimately, the messiah will bring peace (“The wolf will live with the lamb...” – see Revelation 21:1-5)</li> </ul>
Isaiah 40:1-8	<p data-bbox="678 1780 1174 1879">“A voice of one calling: ‘In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God’”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 1885 1174 1900">▪ The role assigned John the Baptist in the</li> </ul>

Reference	Notes
	<p data-bbox="727 233 1040 260">New Testament (Matt 3:1-3)</p> 
Isaiah 42:1-4	<p data-bbox="678 432 1182 491">“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 495 1045 525">▪ The messiah will bring justice</li> <li data-bbox="678 529 1182 617">▪ The messiah won’t be ostentatious (“He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets”)</li> </ul>
Isaiah 49:1-7	<p data-bbox="678 627 1182 716">“I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 720 1182 1005">▪ Verse 6 is key to understanding the Christian concept of the messiah. The messiah is not just a leader to lead the Jewish people out of bondage, but rather also a “light for the Gentiles”. Given the fast acceptance of Christianity by Gentile (Greek, Roman) audiences in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century, this point is especially important.</li> </ul>
Isaiah 52:13-15, 53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 1016 1182 1104">▪ “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering...”</li> <li data-bbox="678 1108 1182 1167">▪ “For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="727 1171 1182 1398">▪ These famous “suffering servant” passages are among the most controversial in the Bible. Christians point to them because of the obvious parallels with Jesus – a man rejected and murdered, who bore the sins of many.</li> <li data-bbox="727 1402 1182 1654">▪ Many Jewish scholars view that these passages are not about the messiah at all, but are rather referring to Israel. However, there are some intriguing passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls that show 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple Jewish expectations of a “suffering servant” messiah.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Reference	Notes
	
Isaiah 59:16-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins...”</li> <li>▪ “He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head...”</li> </ul>
Isaiah 61:1-3	<p>“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The messiah as the anointed one</li> <li>▪ The messiah will proclaim “the day of vengeance of our God”</li> </ul>
Isaiah 62:11	<p>“See, your Savior comes!”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The messiah as a savior</li> </ul>
Jeremiah 23:5-6	<p>“This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Jeremiah, like Isaiah, uses the Branch metaphor to describe the messiah, who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is a king in the line of David (Judah) and</li> <li>▪ Will be called “The LORD Righteousness” – another sign that the messiah will be divine (similar language is used to describe Melchizedek)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Jeremiah 33:14-18	<p>“I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Jeremiah continues the “Branch” metaphor</li> </ul>
Ezekiel 37:24-28	<p>“David my servant will be their prince forever...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Another indication that the messiah will come from the line of David</li> <li>▪ Ultimately, the messiah will bring about an environment in which “[God’s] dwelling place will be with them” – see Rev 21</li> </ul>
Daniel 3:25	<p>“Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are saved from the furnace by one who “looks like a son of the gods” – a pre-incarnate Jesus?</li> </ul>
Daniel 7:13-14	<p>“In my vision at night I looked, and there</p>

Reference	Notes
	<p>before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The messiah existed before becoming incarnate – and will exist forever</li> </ul>
Daniel 9:20-27	<p>“From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Here we have an actual use of the Hebrew word for messiah – or “the anointed one”</li> </ul>
Hosea 3:5	<p>“Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The messiah, from the line of David, will be present during the end times</li> </ul>
Hosea 11:1	<p>“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Matt 2:15 records that Jesus came out of Egypt</li> </ul>
Jonah 1:17	<p>“But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three night...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Some scholars believe that the story of Jonah and the fish is a foretelling of the death and resurrection of Jesus. See Matt 12:40.</li> </ul>
Zechariah 3:8-9	<p>“I will remove the sin of this land in a single day”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Zechariah continues the analogy of the Branch in reference to the messiah, and references the fact that through this Branch, God will “remove the sin of this land in a single day”</li> </ul>
Zechariah 6:12-13	<p>“It is he [the Branch] who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne.”</p>
Zechariah 8:23	<p>“In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.’”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The messiah will be a light to the whole</li> </ul>

Reference	Notes
	world, not just to the Jews
Zechariah 9:9-10	<p data-bbox="678 260 1174 352">“See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey”</p> <ul data-bbox="678 359 1174 520" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 359 1174 451">▪ The Gospel writers associated this passage with the entering of Jesus into Jerusalem (Matt 21:1-9)</li> <li data-bbox="678 457 1174 520">▪ “He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea.”</li> </ul> 
Zechariah 10:4	“From Judah will come the cornerstone”
Zechariah 11:12-13	<p data-bbox="678 848 1105 882">“So they paid me thirty pieces of silver”</p> <ul data-bbox="678 888 1174 945" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 888 1174 945">▪ Matt 26:15 records that Judas received 30 pieces of silver for betraying Jesus</li> </ul>
Zechariah 12:10	<p data-bbox="678 945 1174 1014">“They will look on me, the one they have pierced...”</p> <ul data-bbox="678 1020 1174 1171" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 1020 1174 1077">▪ The messiah will come from the line of David</li> <li data-bbox="678 1083 1174 1171">▪ A continuation of the Isaiah “suffering servant” theme – the messiah will be pierced</li> </ul>
Zechariah 13:1	<p data-bbox="678 1171 1174 1304">“On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity”</p> <ul data-bbox="678 1310 1068 1339" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 1310 1068 1339">▪ The messiah will take away sins</li> </ul>
Malachi 3:1-3	<p data-bbox="678 1339 1174 1465">“See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple...”</p> <ul data-bbox="678 1472 1174 1566" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 1472 1174 1566">▪ A messenger (John the Baptist in Christian theology) will precede the coming of the Lord</li> </ul>
Malachi 4:5-6	<p data-bbox="678 1566 1174 1759">“See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.”</p> <ul data-bbox="678 1766 1174 1885" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 1766 1174 1822">▪ Elijah will return before the day of the Lord. <ul data-bbox="727 1829 1174 1885" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="727 1829 1174 1885">▪ “And he [John the Baptist] will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Reference	Notes
	<p>power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:17)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “These men [the Two Witnesses] have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying.” (Rev 11:6 – see also 1 Kings 1:17)</li> </ul>

## Characteristics of the messiah (Old Testament)



If we combine our lists from the three sections of the Old Testament, we come up with the following characteristics of the messiah – no wonder that the authors of the New Testament associated these characteristics with Jesus!

- The messiah will come out of Judah
- He'll battle with Satan (the serpent)
- He'll have both priestly and kingly roles
- The messiah will be a Redeemer, and will live on earth
- The messiah is God's son; the messiah is divine
- The messiah will suffer at the hands of his detractors
- The priestly authority of the messiah is through the order of Melchizedek – not through the Levites
- The messiah will be rejected by some of his own people
- The messiah will be the final judge (and thus will be part of the end times)
- The messiah will bring peace to believers and a sword to nonbelievers
- The messiah will usher in a new era of peace and tranquility
- The divine messiah will become incarnate, born of a virgin (or a young woman)
- He will reign on David's throne forever
- He will be preceded by a messenger (Elijah, according to Micah)
- He will bring salvation to the Gentiles
- He will bear the sins of many (and will be severely persecuted for his efforts)
- He will perform miracles
- He existed before becoming incarnate

- He will come up out of Egypt

## Apocrypha

The term “Apocrypha” (capital “A”) refers to a collection of books written in the Inter-Testamental period (and into the 1<sup>st</sup> century). In general, these books (2 Esdras and Prayer of Manasseh are exceptions) appeared in the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint, but not in Hebrew versions of the Old Testament.

Before examining a book of the Apocrypha that contains many messianic allusions, we should first point out some books which don’t make an obvious messianic linkage – the histories of the Maccabees (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Maccabees). Judas Maccabeus is almost the prototype of the type of messiah that was described in older Bible commentaries as being what the Jews of Jesus’ time were expecting – a great military leader that frees the Jews from an occupying force, and re-consecrates the temple. And yet, there are no references in the Apocrypha even suggesting that Judas might be the messiah. Thus, the Jews of the Second Temple period must have been looking for additional characteristics in a messiah.

The book of the Apocrypha that has the most messianic allusions (and is also the most apocalyptic of the Apocryphal books) is 2 Esdras. Like the Dead Sea Scrolls (which we’ll examine shortly), 2 Esdras has an almost Christian view of the messiah.

While 2 Esdras does not appear in the Septuagint, it appears in the Slavonic Bible as 3 Esdras, and in an appendix in the Vulgate as 4 Esdras. The work is very apocalyptic in tone, presenting a series of visions of the end times. 2 Esdras was probably written in 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D.

There are a number of messianic passages in 2 Esdras, and the messiah described therein is remarkably similar to the Christian concept of the messiah. Among the key points:

- The messiah is God’s son
- At one point the messiah will die – but will be around during the end times
- The messiah will come from the line of David
- The messiah will be the final judge of the ungodly

<sup>28</sup>For my son the Messiah shall be revealed with those who are with him, and those who remain shall rejoice four hundred years. <sup>29</sup>After those years my son the Messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath.” (2 Esdras 7:28-29, NRSV)

<sup>31</sup>And as for the lion whom you saw rousing up out of the forest and roaring and speaking to the eagle and reproving him for his unrighteousness, and as for all his words that you have heard, <sup>32</sup>this is the Messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the offspring of David, and will come and speak with them. He will denounce them for their ungodliness and for their wickedness, and will display before them their contemptuous dealings. <sup>33</sup>For first he will bring them alive before his judgment seat, and when he has reprovved them, then he will destroy them. <sup>34</sup>But in mercy he will set free the remnant of my people, those who have been saved throughout my borders, and he will make them joyful until the end comes, the day of judgment, of which I spoke to you at the beginning.” (2 Esdras 12:31-34, NRSV)

“<sup>32</sup>When these things take place and the signs occur that I showed you before, then my Son will be revealed, whom you saw as a man coming up from the sea.” (2 Esdras 13:32, NRSV)

“<sup>37</sup>Then he, my Son, will reprove the assembled nations for their ungodliness...” (2 Esdras 13:37, NRSV)

## Dead Sea Scrolls

Many older Bible commentaries discuss the type of messiah that the Jews at the time of Jesus were looking for. These older commentaries often state that a King David-type conqueror/king that would free the Jews from the Romans was the archetypical messianic figure. However, the Dead Sea Scrolls (mostly written between 250 B.C. and 70 A.D.) shed a different light on Second Temple Jewish messianic expectations. There is, for example, some evidence in the scrolls that 1) the messiah would be divine (not just a temporal warrior/king) and that 2) the messiah would suffer.



*The Manual of Discipline* (from the Dead Sea Scrolls Slide Set, Biblical Archaeology Society)

The two main theories as to who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls are 1) the Essenes (described in some detail as a Jewish religious sect by Josephus) and 2) the scrolls are the library of the Temple, taken to Qumran for safekeeping during the Jewish Revolt of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. Regardless of which is the correct theory, we can make the statement that there was at least one prominent Jewish religious sect that had these proto-Christian ideas about the messiah – and perhaps they were actually ideas believed by many Jews.

### ***A divine messiah?***

Like the Christian interpretation, the Scrolls seem to be expecting a divine messiah. For example, one enigmatic scroll seems to discuss the messiah being (depending on the translation) “begat”, “engendered”, or “fathered” by God:

1Q28a/1Q5a “This is the assembly of famous men, [those summoned to] the gathering of the community council, when [God] **begets the Messiah with them.**” (Translated by Florentino Garcia Martinez, Shanks, p. 66)

In a commentary on 2 Samuel 7:14, a messianic figure from the line of David is discussed. This figure will rule at the end of time:

4Q174 “...he is the Branch of David who shall rise...[to rule] in Zion [at the end] of time.” (Shanks, p. 68)



A startling passage from the scrolls talks of a figure that will have “everlasting sovereignty”, and will be called “Son of the Most High” and the “Son of God”. (Compare with Luke 1:32-33).

4Q246 “Affliction will come to earth...[] and great carnage among countries...[] the kings of Assyria [and Eg]ypt...[he] will be great on earth...all will serve...he will be called great...and by his name he will be designated...‘Son of God’ will he be called and ‘Son of the Most High’ they will call him....His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all his ways will be truth. He will jud[ge] the earth in truth and all will make peace. The sword will cease from the earth and all provinces will worship him. The great God will be his patron...His sovereignty is everlasting sovereignty...” (Shanks, p. 69)

1 Enoch (of which 20 copies were found among the Scrolls) describes a figure that it refers to as either the “Son of man” or the “Elect One”, amplifying on the description in Daniel 7:13-14. The “Son of man” prophesied in 1 Enoch sounds remarkably like Jesus Christ – down to the detail that he existed before all creation (see John 1:1-18). Some excerpts follow.

“[The Ancient of Days] answered and said to me: This is the Son of man, to whom righteousness belongs; with whom righteousness has dwelt; and who will reveal all the treasures of that which is concealed; for the Lord of spirits has chosen him...” (1 Enoch 46:1, Laurence translation)

“Before the sun and the signs were created, before the stars of heaven were formed, his [this Son of Man] name was invoked in the presence of the Lord of spirits. A support shall he be for the righteous and the holy to lean upon, without falling; and he shall be the light of nations...All who dwell on earth, shall fall down and worship before him...” (1 Enoch 48:3-4, Laurence)

“...and his [the Elect one] glory is forever and ever; and His power from generation to generation.” (1 Enoch 48, Pt II:2, Laurence)

One of the key roles for the “Son of man”/“Elect One” will be to preside over what, in Christian terms, is referred to as Judgment Day. Some excerpts regarding the day of judgment (and the role of the “Son of man”) follow:

“O ye kings, O ye mighty, who inhabit the world, you shall behold my Elect one, sitting upon the throne of my glory. And he shall judge Azazel [Satan], all his associates, and all his hosts, in the name of the Lord of spirits.” (1 Enoch 54:5, Laurence)

“Who [the Elect one] shall judge all the works of the holy, in heaven above, and in a balance shall he weigh their actions. And then He shall lift up his countenance to judge their secret ways in the word of the name of the Lord of spirits, and their progress in the path of the righteous judgment of the God most high.” (1 Enoch 60:11, Laurence)

“He sat upon the throne of his glory; and the principal part of the judgment was assigned to him, the Son of man.” (1 Enoch 68:39, Laurence)

Finally, the Thanksgiving Hymns, perhaps written by the Teacher of Righteousness (see following section) refer to a figure born of a woman, who will be a wonderful counselor (compare with Isaiah 9:1-7):

“...for in the waves of death she gives birth to a man-child;

with pains of Sheol he bursts forth  
from the crucible of the pregnant one,  
a wonderful counselor with his power;  
yes, a man comes forth from the waves..." (Burrows, p. 403)

### ***A suffering servant messiah?***

Another enigmatic scroll seems to prove that (some) Jews at the time of Jesus interpreted the Isaiah "suffering servant" passages as referring to the messiah. The scroll talks of this figure as atoning for all of the children of his generation. In the same scroll, in an unfortunately incomplete fragment, there is discussion of "hanging" and "let not the nail approach him", but the fragment is not clear if it is talking about the same person as in the earlier quotes.

4Q541 "He will atone for all the children of his generation, and he will be sent to all the children of his [pe]ople. His word is like a word of heaven, and his teaching is in accordance with the will of God. His eternal sun will shine, and his light will be kindled in all the corners of the earth, and it will shine in the darkness. Then the darkness will pass away [fr]om the earth, and thick darkness from the dry land...

They will speak many words against him, and they will invent many [lie]s and fictions against him and speak shameful things about him. Evil will overthrow his generation...His situation will be one of lying and violence [and] the people will go astray in his days, and be confounded...

...and do not afflict the weak by wasting or hanging...[Let] not the nail approach him..." (Translation from *The Suffering Servant at Qumran*, John J. Collins, Bible Review, Dec. 1993)

### ***A Teacher of Righteousness***

A mysterious figure appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls, but is never identified by name – the Teacher of Righteousness. The teacher is mentioned specifically in the Habakkuk Commentary, the Damascus Document, and the Psalms Commentary, and (perhaps) by inference in the MMT and Thanksgiving Scroll. Some scholars view that the teacher was the leader or founder of the sect.

Unlike Judas Maccabeus in the Apocrypha, the Teacher is accorded special powers in the Scrolls that sound remarkably messianic. This could mean that the Scroll-writers viewed that the teacher *was* the messiah (see, for example, *The First Messiah* by Michael O. Wise), or that the teacher had characteristics one would associate with the messiah to come. Some examples follow (note in the fourth quote below, the "interpreter of the law who came to Damascus" is sometimes interpreted as being the founder of the sect, the Teacher of Righteousness):

*Commentary on Hab 2:1* "This means the teacher of righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants the prophets." (Burrows, p. 368)

*Damascus Document* "...the arising of him who will teach righteousness at the end of days." (Burrows, p. 354)

*Commentary on Hab 2:4* "This means all the doers of the law in the house of Judah, whom God will rescue from the house of judgement because of their labor and their faith in the teacher of righteousness." (Burrows, p. 149)

*Damascus Document* "...the star is the interpreter of the law who came to Damascus, as it is written, 'A star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.' The scepter is the prince of the whole congregation. And when he arises, he 'shall break down all the sons of Seth.'" (Burrows, p. 355)

The teacher of righteousness attracted a lot of attention in the early days of scroll research, because of some seeming parallels with Jesus (a great prophet, put to death by enemies, who is expected "at the end of days".)

### ***Two messiahs?***

Finally, like the Old Testament, the Scrolls assign both a priestly and kingly role to the messiah. Interestingly enough, in one of the Scrolls, it could be interpreted that they believed these roles would be assumed by two different people, rather than by one:

"...they shall be judged by the first judgments by which the men of the community began to be disciplined, until there shall come a prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel." (*Manual of Discipline*, Burrows, p. 383)

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## Notes

## About the Author

Robert C. Jones grew up in the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area. He made his living as a hotel lounge band leader/musician from 1974-1981. In 1981, he moved to the Atlanta, Georgia area, where he received a B.S. in Computer Science at DeVry Institute of Technology. From 1984-2009, Robert worked for Hewlett-Packard as a computer consultant.



Robert is an ordained elder in the Presbyterian Church. He has written and taught numerous adult Sunday School courses (see front inside cover). He has also been active in choir ministries over the years, and has taught the *Disciples* Bible Study six times.

Robert is also President of the Kennesaw Historical Society, for whom he has written several books, including "The Law Heard 'Round the World - An Examination of the Kennesaw Gun Law and Its Effects on the Community", "Retracing the Route of the General - Following in the Footsteps of the Andrews Raid", and "Kennesaw (Big Shanty) in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century". A new book, "Images of America: Kennesaw", was published by Arcadia in 2006.

Robert has also written several books on ghost towns in the Southwest, including in Death Valley, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and Mojave National Preserve.

In 2005, Robert co-authored a business-oriented book entitled "Working Virtually: The Challenges of Virtual Teams". His co-authors were Lise Pace and Rob Oyung.

His interests include the Civil War, Medieval Monasteries, American railroads, ghost towns, hiking in Death Valley and the Mojave, and Biblical Archaeology.

Robert is available as a guest speaker on Christian history and theology topics in the Atlanta Metro area, and North Georgia. See <http://www.sundayschoolcourses.com/speaker.htm> for more information.

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