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**Dead Sea Scrolls & New Testament**

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### **Lecture Review Week 4**

**Introduction:** The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in the mid-20th century in the Qumran caves near the Dead Sea, shed light on the beliefs and practices of a group of Jews who lived in the region around the time of Jesus. These Jews were part of a community that is commonly referred to as the Dead Sea Sect, or the Qumran Sect. This paper aims to provide an overview of the Dead Sea Sect's theology, with a particular focus on their worldview, determinism, and eschatology.

**Worldview:** The Dead Sea Sect's worldview was characterized by a dualistic understanding of reality, which divided the world into two opposing forces: light and darkness, good and evil. According to their beliefs, the forces of light were aligned with God, while the forces of darkness were associated with Satan or the Prince of Darkness. The sect saw themselves as the true "sons of light," who were engaged in a spiritual battle against the "sons of darkness."

The Dead Sea Sect believed that the present age was dominated by the forces of darkness, and that only through strict adherence to their strict moral code and esoteric knowledge could they overcome these forces and bring about the coming of the Messianic Age.

**Determinism:** The Dead Sea Sect's understanding of determinism was closely linked to their worldview. They believed that all events in the world were predetermined by God, and that human beings had limited agency in shaping their own destinies. The sect saw themselves as having been chosen by God for a special purpose, and that their actions were preordained to bring about the coming of the Messianic Age.

**Eschatology:** The Dead Sea Sect's eschatology was focused on the coming of the Messianic Age, which they believed would be marked by the defeat of the forces of darkness and the establishment of a new order of righteousness and justice. They believed that the Messiah would come as a conquering king, who would lead the faithful in a final battle against the forces of evil.

The sect also believed in the resurrection of the dead, and that the righteous would be raised up to eternal life, while the wicked would be condemned to eternal punishment. They saw themselves as part of a select group who would be saved during the end times, and that the rest of the world would be destroyed.

**Conclusion:** The Dead Sea Sect's theology was shaped by a complex interplay of worldview, determinism, and eschatology. Their dualistic worldview, which saw the world divided into opposing forces of light and darkness, was closely linked to their belief in determinism, which held that all events in the world were predetermined by God. The sect's eschatology was focused on the coming of the Messianic Age, which they believed would be marked by the defeat of the forces of darkness and the establishment of a new order of righteousness and justice. While the beliefs and practices of the Dead Sea Sect may seem alien to modern readers, their theology provides a fascinating glimpse into the religious beliefs of an ancient community that played an important role in shaping the development of Judaism and Christianity.