

Dead Sea Scrolls

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Lecture Review Week 7

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospels are two of the most significant texts that offer insights into the portrayal of the Messiah in early Jewish and Christian thought. While both texts share a common focus on the figure of the Messiah, they differ in their portrayal of the nature, role, and mission of the Messiah.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, a collection of Jewish texts discovered in the mid-twentieth century, reveal the beliefs of a Jewish sect known as the Essenes who lived in the region of Qumran during the Second Temple period (c. 530 BCE - 70 CE). One of the central beliefs of the Essenes was the expectation of a Messiah who would come to redeem Israel from its oppressors, establish a kingdom of God on earth, and usher in a new era of righteousness and peace. The Messiah, according to the Essenes, was a divine figure, appointed by God to fulfill this mission.

The Dead Sea Scrolls portray the Messiah as a kingly figure who would lead Israel in battle against its enemies and establish a just and righteous kingdom. The Messiah was also seen as a priestly figure, who would purify the people and the land of Israel from sin and impurity. He was expected to perform miraculous deeds, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, and casting out demons, as a sign of his divine authority. The Messiah, according to the Dead Sea Scrolls, would also be a teacher, who would reveal the hidden mysteries of God to the people and lead them in the ways of righteousness.

In contrast, the Gospels, which are four accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, portray the Messiah as a humble and suffering figure who came to redeem humanity through his death and resurrection. Jesus, according to the Gospels, was the Son of God, who had come to earth to save humanity from sin and death. He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, and performed many miracles, such as healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and raising the dead, to demonstrate his divine power and authority.

Unlike the Messiah of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Jesus did not come as a conquering king or warrior, but as a servant who washed the feet of his disciples and willingly submitted himself to the Roman authorities to be crucified. His death and resurrection, according to the Gospels, were the means by which humanity could be reconciled to God and receive salvation. Jesus was also a teacher, who taught the people about the love and mercy of God and the importance of living a life of faith and obedience.

In conclusion, the portrayal of the Messiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospels reflects the diversity of early Jewish and Christian beliefs about the nature and mission of the Messiah. While the Dead Sea Scrolls emphasize the Messiah as a kingly and priestly figure who would establish a just and righteous kingdom, the Gospels present the Messiah as a humble and suffering servant who came to redeem humanity through his death and resurrection. Both portrayals highlight the hope and expectation of a divine figure who would come to save humanity and establish God's kingdom on earth.