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### BOOK REVIEW: The Scepter and The Star

John J. Collins, the Author of *The Scepter and The Star*, provides us with an in-depth research study on Messianism. The author from what I see in the narratives is not mostly identifying the messiah as any particular individual but is trying to provide a broad-scope look at the many facets and possible reasons as to how the messiah concept developed and evolved through time, from one type of messiah to another. The study of Messianism is still thriving to this very modern day and I would recommend to any serious student interested in studying the Messiah or Messianism, to have a copy of this book as the research and debate about messianism thrives and grows.

Messianism is not as simple as the term Messiah. There have been so many apparent messiahs, throughout history. Many so-called messiahs have been deceivers of the sheepfold or the brethren. *The Scepter and The Star* go deep into many realms of messianism and also hits home to the point of what messianism is actually in its totality. Through the study of *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, mentioned and searched in this book; we are provided some added old messianic text in the Jewish tradition. The Star is the searcher of the Law. The Scepter is the prince of the congregation. This is such an excellent analogy, an inspiring point of view, that even in itself, gives you the impression of the giver of the Law, royalty, and the office of the royal priesthood.

The *Dead Sea Scrolls* have provided us with some insights and interesting points of view while maintaining a correlation to the canonical texts; that is the reason I find the Qumran texts

so insightful for study purposes and this book encourages this mindset. I really liked the way the maps of the Qumran caves were illustrated; it gives you such a sense of direction as if you are there. There is an excellent point that is made in *The Scepter and the Star*, the part of messianism and the scrolls. It states that the study of messianism has a more important place in the study of Christianity than ancient Judaism. The Torah rather than the Messiah is central to the tradition of Judaism. The Apostle Paul's rejection of the Law began the separation of Christianity from Judaism. Christianity is based on the belief that Jesus is the Messiah and ushered in a new age. The book shows the problem between Christianity and Judaism, which is that the two religions over the centuries are rooted in the Christian claims that Jesus is Christ, the actual Messiah, which is unacceptable to Jews. *The Scepter and the Star* reveals a very interesting facet of messianism and Eschatology (end times) in general; it states that messianism has become something of an embarrassment in modern culture. In the images of The Branch Davidians, David Koresh is the best example that I can think of, the term messiah has often been loosely used to represent an end-time false Prophet that was an extreme disappointment to the origin of what the messiah truly is. I like this book, it is totally enshrined in the messianic text and confirmed by the revelation of the canonical text. (Jer. 23:5-6) "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, and he shall reign as King and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days, Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety; and this is the name by which he will be called, "The Lord is our righteousness. This book shows that much of the Dead Sea Scrolls allude to much messianism, but there are also hindrances on the subject because of humanistic ideologies and perceptions and opinionated hypotheses by sectarian communities.

The problem that the narrative of this book shows is that because of politics and differences in human beliefs, the word messiah can refer to regular human prophets, priests, and kings. The main concern is the eschatological figure. The messiah should not be a normal marginalized common term as much of the historical canonical texts have done. At the same time, the Scepter and The Star shed light and lean toward a revelation of what messianism and messiah truly are. The Scepter and The Star show in an encouraging manner, the Qumran text found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. I say this because, for example, 1Q285 clearly is a messianic text. The Messianic figure that is mentioned, is called the Branch of King David. The Dead Sea sectarian community had its own distinctive attitude towards messianism and looked for supernatural deliverance in the final war. This messianic attitude makes a very clear and similar allusion to the book of Revelation text; (rev. 17:14) "They will wage war against the Lamb, but The Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of Lords and King of Kings and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers. The book shows that the Davidic king had an established place in the expectations of the sects who studied the Qumran text of the Dead Sea Scrolls. 4Q285 shows clarity that the Branch of David that was mentioned, cannot be no other than an anointed eschatological king and is in fact identified as the Righteous Messiah.

The author Joseph Collins shows an extensive knowledge of the Hebrew Bible and a historical and theological understanding of the different ancient texts. In reading this book you discover that you gain an insightful perspective of the messianic thought and ideas during and before Jesus's time. The book provides very broad insights into how messianism evolved from one type to another. This book is an excellent reading that should get a serious student of the Word of God to look again at the Bible and re-read it with more insightful desires...

