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Messiah (NA)

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Collins, John Joseph. *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. 2nd ed. W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2010

Joseph John Collins unpacks the Messianic anticipation throughout the Hebrew Bible, The New Testament, Apocrypha & Pseudepigrapha, The Dead Sea Scrolls, and Rabbinic Sources. He notes three uses of M messiahship: “The Priestly, Prophetic, and Davidic.” This book contains nine chapters. Chapters two, four, five, six, and nine ends with a conclusion. Collin explains the exception of chapter six, which was rewritten, and expanded to take account of Israel Knohl’s theories and the Newly published “Vision of Gabriel” (pg. viii). However, we will only discuss chapters one, two, three, and four.

Moving forward, Chapter One, “Messianism and the Scrolls,” introduces the question, “A common Jewish hope?” and The Dead Sea Scrolls/the Terminological issue (pgs.1-19). Collins explains his concern in the book is primarily with Jewish Messianism as an interesting phenomenon in the history of religion in its own right and as the context in which the earliest acclamation of Jesus as messiah must be understood. This includes the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, who may have lived at the site, how the library might have been compiled, and providing broader views of what Judaism was at that time.

Chapter 2, “The Fallen Booth of David: Messianism and the Hebrew Bible,” speaks on “The emergence of a Canon; The Royal Ideology; Predictions of an Ideal King; A Gentile “Messiah; A Messianic movement in the Persian Period; The Absence of Messianism in the second temple period; The Transformation of Messianism in Daniel; The Savior King in Egyptian Judaism, and conclusion” (pgs. 21-50). Throughout this fantastic body of work, one becomes aware that the Jewish ideas of Messianism were not uniform. Dominating was the notion of the Davidic messiah as the king who would restore the kingdom of Israel. Minor messianic strands envisaged a priestly messiah, an anointed prophet, or a heavenly Son of Man. Christian Messianism drew heavily on some little strands (prophet, Son of Man) and eventually developed them into a doctrine of Christology remote from its Jewish origins.

Chapter three, “A Shoot from the Stump of Jesse,” explains “The Psalms of Solomon; The Political Context; The Davidic Hope; The Davidic Messiah in the Scrolls, The Peshar on Isaiah; The Messiah in the War Rule; Diverse Titles of the Messiah; St and Scepter in the Damascus Document; Exegetical traditions, and The Character and Role of the Davidic Messiah” (pgs. 52-77). The Psalm of Solomon gives the most detailed description of the Davidic messiah before the New Testament, which makes it an essential text for understanding the historical development of Davidic messianism.

In Chapter Four, “The Messiahs of Aaron and Israel,” the author begins with, “One or two Messiahs? “Theories of Development; Excursus: The Damascus Documents, Col.7; The Origins of Priestly Messianism; Jubilees; Aramaic Levi; The testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs; The development of the Levi Tradition, and conclusion” (pgs.79-108). Collin concluded that the Davidic Messiah had a clear basis in the scriptures, which became widespread in the sectors of Judaism in the last century before the Common Era in reaction to the rule of the

Hasmoneans. She also explains in this chapter that the notion of a priestly Messiah was not so evident from the scriptures and flourished mainly among people with a pretty solid priestly ideology. As it was not confine to the Qumran settlement, but it was attested in literature that was related to the Dead Sea Sect as exemplified in the Damascus document, even if some of that literature (Jubilees) belongs to the forerunners of the sect” (108).

In Conclusion, various factors shaped the Christology of the early church. The crucifixion of Jesus led to a search for the Scriptures and a new creative exegesis of messianic prophecy. There was a deliberate attempt (not sinister) to claim more for Jesus than had been claimed for any other agent of God. Despite the divergence of their branches, however, Christian and Jewish Messianism were rooted in common ground. Collins produced a significant volume on Qumran’s archaeology, which deserves broad consideration and readership. This book was helpful to read, and the layout was on point. This book is a keeper to read more than one time.