

Thy Kingdom Come
Expectations of a Messiah
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1. Today, as we approach the celebration of the birth of Jesus, we will look at the Jewish expectations of a Messiah at the time of his birth.
2. As we will see, the clearest picture does not come from the Hebrew Scriptures that Christians call the Old Testament.
3. Instead, the clearest picture comes from a number of Jewish writings, including those found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, that were in circulation during the first century and are mostly unknown to Christians today.
4. Some of those writings show that Jewish expectations of a Messiah corresponded closely with the descriptions of Jesus in the New Testament.

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1. There is no doubt from reports in the New Testament that people living at the time of Jesus were expecting a Messiah to rescue them from what they considered the pagan Roman rulers.
2. For example, the *Gospel of Matthew* reports that when King Herod heard that the **“king of the Jews”** had been born, he asked the Jewish leaders **“where the Messiah was to be born.”** *Matthew 2:1-4.*
3. The *Gospel of John* reports that a Samaritan woman talking to Jesus said: **“I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”** *John 4:25.*

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1. There is also no doubt that the New Testament reports that some of these people believed the Messiah would be a descendant of King David, a member of the Tribe of Judah.
2. As Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for the last time, his followers in Jericho greeted him as the **“Son of David.”** *Luke 18:38–39.*
3. The *Gospel of Matthew* reports the following exchange: **“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ‘What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?’ ‘The son of David,’ they replied.”** *Matthew 22:42.*

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1. However, the Gospels also say that people thought that John the Baptist might be the Messiah.
2. According to the *Gospel of Luke*: **“The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah.”** *Luke* 3:15.
3. The Synoptic Gospels all report the following: **“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’”** *Matthew* 16:13-14; *Mark* 8:27-29; *Luke* 9:18-20.
4. But John the Baptist was a descendant through both his mother and father of Aaron, a descendent of Levi who established the Jewish priesthood. *Luke* 1:5.
5. So the people who believed that John might be the Messiah must have believed that the Messiah did not have to be a descendant of David and could be a priest.

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1. The *Epistle to the Hebrews*, written for a Jewish audience, also suggests that the Messiah was expected to be a priest rather than a king.
2. Noting that Jesus **“descended from Judah,”** the letter goes on to explain that the old rules that priests could only be descendants of Aaron had been eliminated by the **“better covenant”** established by Jesus. *Hebrews* 7:14–28.

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1. Jesus himself seems to have questioned, if not doubted, the claim of **“teachers of the law,”** a reference to Pharisees, that the **“Messiah is the son of David.”** *Mark* 12:35.
2. Quoting David’s expression of loyalty to what Jesus interpreted as a reference to the Messiah, Jesus asked: **“How then can [the Messiah] be his son?”** *Mark* 12:36–37.
3. What is going on here?
4. Did the people at the time of Jesus expect that the Messiah would be a descendant of David, of the Tribe of Judah, or did they believe the Messiah would be a priest, of the Tribe of Levi?
5. Or perhaps they expected that the Messiah would be a member of the Tribe of Judah but a priest, even though all previous priests had been members of the Tribe of Levi.

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1. The clearest statement in the New Testament about the origin of the belief that the Messiah would be a descendant of David comes from the *Gospel of John*.
2. John reports that some people rejected Jesus as the Messiah, saying: **“How can the Messiah come from Galilee? Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David’s descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?”** *John* 7:41-42.
3. Most modern New Testament translations, which often footnote Old Testament references, cite nothing in the Old Testament to support this claim.
4. And Bible readers will look in vain for anything in the Old Testament that expressly states that the Messiah will be a descendant of David.
5. In fact, it may come as a surprise to Christians that nothing in the Old Testament expressly predicts the coming of the Messiah, let alone one who is a descendant of David.

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1. The term “Messiah” is derived from a Hebrew word meaning “an anointed person.”
2. In the Hebrew Scriptures, kings, priests and prophets were all anointed. *1 Kings* 19:16; *Leviticus* 8:12; *1 Samuel* 10:1.
3. When Cyrus the Great of Persia allowed the Jews in exile in Babylon to go home, he was said to have been anointed by God. *Isaiah* 45:1.
4. *Daniel* 9:25 and 9:26 include a word that could be translated as “messiah,” but is usually translated as **“an anointed one”** because it refers to a foreign ruler and not to a redeemer, as people currently understand the term “Messiah.”
5. *Psalms* 2:2 also includes a word that could be translated as “messiah,” but is usually translated as **“his anointed,”** again because it does not refer to a future redeemer.

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1. Similarly, although the Old Testament includes references to a future king in the line of King David who would restore Israel to its former glory, none of those references identifies that king as “the Messiah.” *E.g., Jeremiah* 33:15; *Micah* 5:2.
2. To be sure, such a king would be anointed, but the Messiah expected by people at the time of Jesus was not just a king, but a very special person who could **“explain everything to us.”** *John* 4:25.

3. Nothing in the Hebrew Scriptures that Christians know as the Old Testament unambiguously describes such a person.
4. As a result, most modern English translations of the Old Testament include no reference to **“the Messiah,”** a term occurring 61 times in the New Testament.

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1. So, what are we to conclude about the statement in the *Gospel of John* that **“Scripture say[s] that the Messiah will come from David’s descendants”?** *John* 7:41-42.
2. What we can conclude most easily is that the original *Gospel of John* does not say that.
3. The Greek word translated as “Scripture” in most English translations of *John* 7:42 is “*graph*”, a singular word that can simply mean “a writing.”
4. Here is *John* 7:42 in Young’s Literal Translation: **“Did not the Writing say, that out of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem -- the village where David was -- the Christ doth come?”**
5. The singular form is significant – at the time of the New Testament, the books in what we now consider to be the Old Testament were not considered to be a single work but instead a collection of writings.
6. Interestingly, several English translations, including the New International Version, translate the plural of “*graph*” as **“writings”** in *Matthew* 26:56 and *Romans* 16:26.
7. If we translate “*graph*” as “a writing” and not as “Scripture,” we can certainly find a writing from the time of Jesus that expressly supports the conclusion that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David.

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1. The *Psalms of Solomon* is among the Jewish writings called “Pseudepigrapha,” popular works by Jewish authors that were not considered part of the Hebrew Scriptures when that canon was determined in the first century A.D.
2. *Psalms of Solomon* comprises 18 psalms, mimicking the style of the original *Psalms* but attributing them to Solomon instead of David.
3. Early Christians accepted these psalms as having been written by Solomon and included *Psalms of Solomon* among their sacred books.
4. Scholars today believe *Psalms of Solomon* was written shortly after the independent Hasmonean Kingdom established by the Maccabees had been conquered by the Romans under Pompey in 63 B.C.

5. It was during this period that people began hoping for someone who would rescue them from the Romans and restore their independence.
6. Seeing that Cyrus the Great had allowed their ancestors to return from exile in Babylon and had been anointed by God, they began referring to their rescuer as “the Anointed One” or “the Messiah.”
7. The *Psalms of Solomon* contains “**one of the chief Messianic passages in the post-Biblical literature in Judaism.**” Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* at 145.
8. Psalms 17 and 18 pray for a “**king, the son of David**” and “**the Lord Messiah,**” who will “**shatter [the] unrighteous rulers**” and “**reign over Israel.**” *Psalms of Solomon* 17:21 - 22, 32.
9. The prayer asks of God: “**May God purify Israel for the day of mercy in blessing, for the appointed day when He raises up his Messiah.**” *Psalms of Solomon* 18:5.
10. The unambiguous reference to the “**Messiah**” in *Psalms of Solomon* is the earliest known use of that term to refer to an expected liberator.
11. This Davidic Messiah would not only overcome the alien rulers (that is, the Romans), but would reunite the tribes of Israel, divide the lands of Israel among them, and reestablish righteousness.
12. Here we have, in a popular writing known in the first century, clear evidence that the Messiah would be the son of David, exactly as stated in *John* 7:42.

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1. Christians today, most not knowing of *Psalms of Solomon*, often assume that first century Jews expected a Messiah who would be a warrior like King David and expel the Romans by force.
2. That image makes it difficult to understand why they could have greeted Jesus as the Messiah as he rode down the Mount of Olives on a donkey after preaching a message of peace and love. *Mark* 11:9–10.
3. In fact, some Christians state that the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah because they were expecting a warrior and Jesus was a man of peace.

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1. But *Psalms of Solomon* shows that this idea is mistaken.
2. Here is what it says about the coming Messiah: “**For he shall not put his trust in horse and rider and bow, nor shall he multiply for himself gold and silver for war, nor shall he gather confidence from a multitude for the day of battle. The Lord Himself is his king, the hope of him who is mighty through (his) hope in God. He**

shall be compassionate to all nations who (shall be) in fear before him. He will smite the earth with the word of his mouth for ever. He will bless the people of the Lord with wisdom and gladness.” *Psalms of Solomon* 17:33-35.

3. For first century Jews familiar with *Psalms of Solomon*, Jesus perfectly matched that description and must therefore be the promised Messiah.
4. That is why they welcomed the peaceful man on the donkey with palm branches.

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1. *Psalms of Solomon* refers to resurrection of the dead to **“life eternal.”** *Psalms of Solomon* 3:16.
2. Because Sadducees at the time of Jesus rejected resurrection, most scholars believe that *Psalms of Solomon* was written by one or more Pharisees, Jews who accepted resurrection of the dead.
3. In fact, another name for *Psalms of Solomon* is *Psalms of the Pharisees*.
4. The expectation of a Messiah descending from David was a common belief of first century Pharisees.
5. When Jesus asked a group of Pharisees, **“What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?”** they said to him, **“The son of David.”** *Matthew* 22:42.

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1. If the Pharisees and *Psalms of Solomon* predicted that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David, why did some people believe that John the Baptist, who was a descendant of the Levi, might be the Messiah?
2. The answer is that other Jewish writings in circulation at the time had different views of the Messiah’s heritage.
3. The book of *Jubilees* was very popular among Jews in the first century and was quoted by a number of early Christian writers, including Justin Martyr.
4. Written in the second century B.C., *Jubilees* **“presents itself as a revelation given to Moses and rehearses all the history of Genesis down to the time of Moses.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 353.
5. *Jubilees* is included in the Old Testament of Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, but Jews and most other Christians consider it Pseudepigrapha.

6. Many scholars believe that Chapter 31, even though it does not use the term “Messiah,” predicts that there will be two Messiahs, one a priest from the Tribe of Levi and one a king from the Tribe of Judah.

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1. The expectation of two Messiahs is made explicit in *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a Pseudepigraphic work originally written in about 100 B.C. that includes biographical statements said to have been written by the twelve sons of Jacob.
2. In 1913, R. H. Charles, the best-known scholar of Pseudepigrapha, wrote: “[T]he **Sermon on the Mount reflects in several instances the spirit and even reproduces the very phrases of [Testaments].**” II Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* at 291 – 92.
3. Professor Charles also noted that the letters of Paul contain phrases found in *Testaments*.
4. For example, the *Testament of Levi* states: **“The wrath of the Lord came upon them to the uttermost.”** *Testaments of the Patriarchs (Levi)* 6:11.
5. The identical sentence is in *1 Thessalonians* 2:16.
6. Most scholars have concluded that the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* was well known at the time of Jesus.

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1. The Testament attributed to Simeon contains the following prediction: **“And now, my children, obey Levi, and in Judah shall ye be redeemed: and be not lifted up against these two tribes, for from them shall arise to you the salvation of God. For the Lord shall raise up from Levi as it were a Priest, and from Judah as it were a King [God and man.] So shall He save all the Gentiles and the race of Israel.”** *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (Simeon)* 7:1-3.
2. Most scholars believe that the words **“God and man”** were inserted later by Christians, but that the prediction of two Messiahs – one priest from the Tribe of Levi and one a king from the Tribe of Judah – was in the original Jewish version.

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1. The Testament attributed to Judah ranks the two Messiahs, placing the priestly Messiah above the kingly Messiah: **“And now, my children, love Levi, that ye may abide, and exalt not yourselves against him, lest ye be utterly destroyed. For to me the Lord gave the kingdom, and to him the priesthood, and He set the kingdom beneath the priesthood. To me He gave the things upon the earth; to him the things in the heavens. As the heaven is higher than the earth, so is the priesthood of God**

higher than the kingdom upon the earth.” *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (Judah) 21:1-4.*

2. In light of this statement, it is easy to see why some first century Jews could conclude that John the Baptist was not only the Messiah but was superior to Jesus.

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1. This statement from the Testament of Judah may explain why the *Gospel of John* quotes John the Baptist using the language of heaven and earth to describe a different Messianic order: **“The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks of one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.”** *John 3:31.*

2. In putting Jesus, the descendant of Judah, above himself, the descendant of Levi, John the Baptist uses language similar to that in the Testament of Judah, but reverses the order.

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1. Copies of both *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and *Jubilees* were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran, which also indicate that Jews at the time of Jesus were expecting two Messiahs.

2. The Community Rule says **“there shall come the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel.”** *IQS 9:11.*

3. Scholars have interpreted this prediction as suggesting a coming prophet and **“two Messiahs.”** Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* at 539.

4. And, like *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the Dead Sea Scrolls suggest that the priestly Messiah will be superior to the kingly Messiah.

5. A fragment referring to the priestly Messiah descending from Levi concludes: **“He will atone for the sons of his generation and he will be sent to all the sons of his people. His word is like a word of heaven and his teaching is according to the will of God. His eternal sun will shine, and his fire will blaze in all the corners of the earth. Then darkness will disappear from the earth and deep darkness from the dry land.”** *4Q541.*

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1. The *Gospel of Luke* quotes Jesus as saying this about John the Baptist: **“I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”** *Luke 7:28.*

2. Scholars believe this was recognition of the common understanding that the greater Messiah would be a descendant of Levi, but that Jesus had changed the expected order.

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1. Reputable authors for more than 100 years have claimed that Jewish literature at the time of Jesus left no room for a divine Messiah.
2. I have quoted some of those authors before.
3. For example, in 1883, a scholar named Alfred Edersheim wrote an extraordinary book called "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah," in which he said: **"First, the idea of a Divine Personality, and of the union of two Natures in the Messiah, seems to have been foreign to the Jewish auditory of Jesus of Nazareth, and even at first to His disciples."** Edersheim, Alfred, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* at 120 (Updated Ed. Hendrickson 1993).
4. Karen Armstrong has written: **"By the time of Jesus' death in about 30, the Jews were passionate monotheists, so nobody expected the Messiah to be a divine figure: he would simply be an ordinary, if privileged, human being Nobody since the return from Babylon had imagined that Yahweh actually had a son, like the abominable deities of the *goyim*."** Armstrong, *A History of God* at 80.
5. Some scholars have recently concluded that these claims are not true.
6. As one Jewish author recently wrote: **"Jews at the same time of Jesus had been waiting for a Messiah who was both human and divine and who was the Son of Man."** Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels* at 142.

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1. Support for this assertion can be found in the *Book of Enoch*, also called *I Enoch* or *Ethiopian Enoch* to distinguish it from other books associated with Enoch, the great grandfather of Noah.
2. *I Enoch* is part of the Bible of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which traces its roots back to the first century (*see Acts 8:26-27*), but is considered Pseudepigrapha by most Christians.
3. Professor Charles writes: **"[T]he history of the development of the higher theology during the two centuries before the Christian era could not be written without [1] Enoch. Nearly all the writers of the New Testament were familiar with [I Enoch], and were more or less influenced by it in thought and diction"** II Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* at 162 - 63.

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1. New Testament writers believed *1 Enoch* contained important prophecies.
2. For example, the *Epistle of Jude* in the New Testament claims: **“Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.’”** *Jude* 14–15 (NKJV).
3. The prophecy Jude is quoting comes from *1 Enoch*: **“And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones To execute judgement upon all, And to destroy all the ungodly: And to convict all flesh Of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, And of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”** *1 Enoch* 1:9.

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1. Most scholars today believe the *1 Enoch* was written by a number of Jewish authors from the third to the first century B.C.
2. The newest section of *1 Enoch*, called either “Similitudes” or “Parables,” predicts a coming **“Son of man”** who **“shall loosen the bridles of the powerful, and break in pieces the teeth of sinners.”** *1 Enoch* 46:2, 3.
3. The unknown writer of Similitudes says this: **“In that hour was this Son of man invoked before the Lord of spirits, and his name in the presence of the Ancient of days. Before the sun and the signs were created, before the stars of heaven were formed, his 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. He shall be the hope of those whose hearts are troubled. All, who dwell on earth, shall fall down and worship before him; shall bless and glorify him, and sing praises to the name of the Lord of spirits. Therefore the Elect and the Concealed One existed in his presence, before the world was created, and forever.”** *1 Enoch* 48:2–5.
4. The Son of Man of *1 Enoch* is expressly called **“the Messiah.”** *1 Enoch* 51:4.

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1. The predictions in the Similitudes of *1 Enoch* about the expected Messiah bear **“remarkable similarity to the N[ew] T[estament] portrayal of Jesus Christ.”** Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 386.

2. Like *1 Enoch's* Messiah, Jesus referred to himself as the **“Son of man.”** *E.g., Matthew 20:18.*
3. According to *John*, like the predicted Messiah of *1 Enoch*, Jesus **“was with God in the beginning,”** described himself as the **“light of the world”** and gave hope to those whose **“hearts [were] troubled.”** *John 1:2; 8:12; 14:1, 27.*
4. Like the Messiah of *1 Enoch*, Jesus expected people to **“fall down and worship me.”** *Matthew 4:9.*
5. Like *1 Enoch's* Messiah, people worshiping Jesus will **“sing praises of your name.”** *Romans 15:9.*
6. And, like *1 Enoch's* Messiah, Jesus was **“in closest relationship with the Father.”** *John 1:18.*

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1. According to *1 Enoch*, the **“Son of man”** will eventually judge humanity **“sit[ting] upon a throne of glory.”** *1 Enoch 45:2–6.*
2. Jesus told his disciples: **“Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”** *Matthew 19:28.*
3. According to *1 Enoch*, at the time of that judgment, **“the kings of the earth and the mighty men, who have gained the world by their achievements, become humble in countenance.”** *1 Enoch 48:7.*
4. Contemplating the birth of Jesus, Mary said: **“He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.”** *Luke 1:52.*
5. In addition to referring to the expected Messiah as the **“Son of man,”** *1 Enoch* also refers to him as the **“Righteous One.”** *1 Enoch 38:2.*
6. The writer of *Luke* and *Acts* uses the same terms to refer to Jesus. *Acts 3:14.*
7. As one author writes: **“[Christians] saw some special importance to this work, and it influenced much of their thinking about the Messiah.”** Barker, *The Lost Prophet* at 19.

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1. *1 Enoch's* descriptions of the expected Messiah are so similar to how the New Testament portrays Jesus that some scholars have suspected that the *Similitudes* was written by Christians. *E.g., Bernstein, The Formation of Hell* at 191.

2. Among the evidence supporting this conclusion is that the Similitudes, unlike the remainder of *1 Enoch*, was not found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, all of which were written before New Testament descriptions of Jesus.
3. The best evidence that *1 Enoch* is not a Christian writing is that Similitudes suggests Enoch will be the Messiah, which is clearly not what Christians believe. *1 Enoch* 70.
4. In addition, *1 Enoch's* Messiah is never called the “**Son of God,**” an essential part of the Christian description of Jesus. *E.g., Luke 3:38.*
5. Finally, *1 Enoch* does not predict that the Messiah will die and be resurrected, the most important teaching of Christianity.
6. Based on this evidence, most scholars have concluded that the Similitudes of *1 Enoch* was written by a Jewish writer before the earliest writings of the New Testament. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 387; Barker, *The Lost Prophet* at 4; Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* at 399; Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels* at 95.
7. Consequently, it was not only Christians who expected a divine Messiah, but other Jews in the first century as well.
8. As a Jewish author recently wrote: “[*1 Enoch*] shows that there were other **Palestinian Jews who expected a Redeemer known as the Son of Man, who would be a divine figure embodied in an exalted human.**” Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels* at 73.
9. Another author, also looking at *1 Enoch*, writes: “[**B**]efore the writing of the **N[ew] T[estament], there was a ‘hope of salvation mediated by a supernatural, heavenly savior figure, which might be fulfilled in any of a number of ways.’**” Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 387.

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1. It seems clear from the New Testament that first century Jews believed that the expected Messiah would usher in the end of time and the resurrection of the dead.
2. For example, when Jesus visited the sisters of the dead Lazarus, Martha said: “**I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.**” *John 11:24.*
3. When Jesus announced that he was “**the resurrection and the life,**” Martha recognized him as “**the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.**” *1 John 11:25, 27.*

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1. The idea that the Messiah would initiate the resurrection of the dead is entirely absent from the Hebrew Scriptures.
2. An extraordinary document found among the Dead Sea Scrolls called the *Messiah Apocalypse*, says that **“His Messiah,”** who will sit on the **“throne of the eternal kingdom,”** **“liberates the captives, restores sight to the blind, straightens the b[ent]”** and **“will heal the wounded and revive the dead and bring good news to the poor.”** *4Q521*.
3. This description echoes the words of *Isaiah* 35:5-6 and 61:1 that the **“eyes of the blind [will] be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped”** and a prophet will **“preach good news to the poor.”**
4. But totally absent from *Isaiah* or any other Old Testament writing is a suggestion that anyone will raise the dead.
5. The *Messiah Apocalypse* includes the earliest known Jewish connection between the expected Messiah and the resurrection of the dead that became so important to Christianity.

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1. It is not clear if the idea that the Messiah would resurrect the dead originated with the writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls or had become an accepted Jewish belief that these writers simply restated.
2. What seems clear is the expectations set out in the *Messiah Apocalypse* were known by Jesus and the New Testament writers.
3. The *Gospels of Matthew* and *Luke* both report that followers of John the Baptist asked Jesus: **“Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”** *Matthew* 11:2; *Luke* 7:20.
4. Jesus replied: **“Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”** *Matthew* 11:4–6; *Luke* 7:22.
5. Jesus’ reported response, in language virtually identical to that of the *Messiah Apocalypse*, told anyone who knew of the expectations of that scroll that Jesus satisfied those expectations and was therefore the Messiah.
6. It is important to note that Jesus was responding to questions from the followers of John the Baptist, whom many scholars believe was familiar with the teachings of the Essenes at Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

7. So, followers of John the Baptist may have known about the Messiah Apocalypse and asked Jesus questions based on it to see if he was the Messiah they expected.
8. Another part of the *Messiah Apocalypse* said that the **“heavens and the earth shall listen to his Messiah.”** 4Q521.
9. New Testament writers reported Jesus’ power over nature. *Mark* 4:41.

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1. A scroll called the *Aramaic Apocalypse* and identified as 4Q246 is also consistent with how New Testament writers described Jesus and again shows that first century Jews were using the term “Son of God” to describe an expected king.
2. The scroll states: **“[He] shall be great upon the earth, [O King! All shall] make [peace], and all shall serve [him. He shall be called the son of] the [G]reat [God], and by his name shall he be named. He shall be hailed the Son of God, and they shall call him Son of the Most High . . . , and his kingdom will be a kingdom forever.”** 4Q246 1:9–2:10.
3. Because the remainder of the scroll has been destroyed, it is not entirely clear to whom this description applies, but most scholars assume it refers to an expected Messiah.
4. The *Gospel of Luke* uses very similar language in relating the angel’s announcement to Mary that she would bear a son: **“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end. *** So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”** *Luke* 1:32 – 33, 35.
5. The title, **“Son of the Most High,”** which is used in both the *Aramaic Apocalypse* and *Luke*, was not used in this form in the Hebrew Scriptures.
6. As one author writes: **“It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Luke is dependent in some way, whether directly or indirectly, on this long lost text from Qumran.”** VanderKam, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* at 335.

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1. A controversial scroll may also be relevant to first century expectations of the Messiah.
2. A line of a scroll fragment named the *Pierced Messiah Scroll* can be translated as: **“And they shall slay the Prince of the Congregation.”** Golb, *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls* at 239.

3. It can also be translated as: **“The Prince of the Congregation shall slay him.”**
Id.
4. If the scroll is interpreted as **“a reference to an executed messianic figure . . . , it is the first such reference to be found in a pre-Christian text.”** *Id.* at 377.
5. Such an interpretation would have supported early Christian views that Jesus was the Messiah even though he had been **“pierced.”** *John 19:37.*

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1. By the middle of the first century A.D., the followers of Jesus were convinced that he was the Messiah that they had been expecting based on Jewish writings that existed at the time.
2. Other Jews were not so convinced and continued writing about the Messiah, with some of the writings apparently intended to counter the Christian idea that the Messiah had already arrived.
3. The fact that many first century Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah did not mean that they rejected the description of the Messiah that was being used in connection with Jesus.
4. An Orthodox Jewish scholar recently wrote: **“The great innovation of the Gospels is only this: to declare that the Son of Man is already here, that he walks among us.”** Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels* at 101.
5. That fact is made clear by two related Jewish writings made near the end of the first century **“when Christianity was making an aggressive attack on Judaism.”** Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* at 141.
6. Both sought to reassure those who rejected Jesus as the Messiah that the coming of the Messiah and the end of time were nonetheless near, at which time their oppression by the Romans would end.

Slide 35

1. *4 Ezra* or *2 Esdras*, written as an ancient revelation by God to Ezra, sought to explain that God allowed the Romans to destroy the Temple in 70 A.D. because of their sins. *4 Ezra* 3:21–22.
2. *4 Ezra* said Jewish independence would be established by a Messiah, whose identity would be kept hidden **“until the end of days.”** *4 Ezra* 12:32.
3. *4 Ezra* quoted God as saying that when **“my son the Messiah”** is revealed, he will reign among the living for four hundred years, at which time **“my son the Messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath.”** *4 Ezra* 7:28–29.

4. Christians didn't believe that the identity of the Messiah would be hidden until the end of time or that Jesus would die when he returned.
5. As a result, most scholars believe this reference to the Messiah as the son of God is **“independent of the Jesus movement entirely.”** Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels* at 97.
6. The similarities with New Testament teachings reflect beliefs shared by those who considered Jesus the Messiah and those who were still waiting.
7. As one author writes: **“4 Ezra often conforms to traditional rabbinic exegesis and views.”** Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* at 414.
8. Said another way, it was not the idea that the Messiah was the son of God that set first century Christians apart from other Jews – it was their conclusion that Jesus was that son.

Slide 36

1. The *Apocalypse of Baruch*, usually known as *2 Baruch* to distinguish it from the Apocryphal book of *Baruch*, was written by a number of unknown Jewish authors in about 90 A.D., at about the same time the *Gospel of John*.
2. *2 Baruch* was written as an ancient vision recorded by Baruch, a scribe to the Biblical prophet Jeremiah, and is related to *4 Ezra*.
3. Unlike Christian writings, which proclaimed that the Messiah had already come in Jesus, *2 Baruch* says that the Messiah will not come until **“after the signs have come.”** *2 Baruch* 72:2.
4. Those signs include **“famine and the withholding of rain”** and **“earthquakes and terrors.”** *2 Baruch* 27:6, 7.
5. These signs are similar to what the *Gospel of Matthew* says will be the signs of Jesus' return. *Matthew* 24:7.
6. Both writings probably based their teachings on *Jubilees*, which, said the end of time would be preceded by **“famine, and death, and sword, and captivity, and all kinds of calamities and pains.”** *Jubilees* 23:13.

Slide 37

1. According to *2 Baruch*, when the Messiah comes to initiate the final judgment, **“books will be opened in which are written the sins of all those who have sinned, and again also the treasuries in which the righteousness of all those who have been righteous in creation is gathered.”** *2 Baruch* 24:1.
2. **“Then all who have fallen asleep in hope of Him shall rise again. But the souls of the wicked, when they behold all these things, shall then waste away the**

more. For they shall know that their torment has come and their perdition has arrived.” *Id.* 4-5.

3. This teaching is consistent with Christian teachings.
4. According to *Revelation*, at the final judgment “[a]nother book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.” *Revelation* 20:12.
5. Jesus said: **“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”** *John* 5:28-29.

Slide 38

1. In a very eloquent passage, the writer of *2 Baruch* predicted that the end times were imminent: **“For the youth of this world has passed away, and the power of creation is already exhausted, and the coming of the times is very near and has passed by. And the pitcher is near the well, and the ship to the harbor, and the journey to the city, and life to its end.”** *2 Baruch* 85:10.
2. *Matthew*, written at about the same time, quotes Jesus as saying that the end times would occur in **“this generation.”** *Matthew* 24:34.
3. The end time teachings of *2 Baruch* and the New Testament are similar because of **“shared religious and cultural traditions”** among first century Christians and Jews. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 426.
4. As one Jewish author recently wrote, the end of the first century was **“a time in which the question of the difference between Judaism and Christianity just didn’t exist as it does now.”** Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels* at 1.
5. First century Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah and those who didn’t believed in the imminent end of time and the resurrection of the righteous.
6. First century Jews were not divided about what to expect in the Messiah, but whether Jesus met those expectations.
7. For Christians then and now, he did.

Slide 39

1. Next week, we will talk about the birth of Jesus, whom Christians recognized as the promised Messiah.
2. We will tell the story as it is usually told, adding some details from history along the way that will both shed light on parts of the story.

3. As we will see, interpretation of a single verse that is recited in many churches during the Christmas season is at the heart of the religious differences among Christianity, Judaism and Islam.
4. We will end by looking at why we celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25.

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