



## Dune Messiah

*Frank Herbert*

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**Dune Messiah** continues the story of the man Muad'dib, heir to a power unimaginable, bringing to completion the centuries-old scheme to create a super-being."Brilliant...It is all that **Dune** was, and maybe a little bit more."--**Galaxy Magazine**

## Dune Messiah Details

Date : Published July 15th 1987 by Ace Books (first published October 1969)

ISBN : 9780441172696

Author : Frank Herbert

Format : Mass Market Paperback 331 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Fantasy

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## From Reader Review Dune Messiah for online ebook

### Jamie says

I really liked Frank Herbert's classic science fiction novel Dune when I first read it a few months ago --so much so that I named it one of the best books I read that year. But upon finally getting around to the sequel, Dune Messiah I'm pretty disappointed. It's really boring.

Don't get me wrong, I can see some of the impressive literary clockwork that Herbert assembles in the book. Where Dune told the story of Paul Muad'Dib's rise to the Emperor, controller of the universe's only source of the coveted super spice "melange," and general badass dude, Messiah tells the story of his downfall. It also follows through on one of the more interesting concepts introduced in the first book: Paul's spice-induced ability to foresee the eventual species-wide extinction of humans and the hard choices he has to make in order to steer history towards a lesser evil. Indeed, Messiah fast forwards to a point where Paul's fanatic followers have propagated a holy war that has destroyed entire planets and left over 60 billion people dead in just a few years. By those measures, Paul is the worst monster history has ever created, yet he has to bear the mostly private burden of knowing that he's killing all those people to save the race as a whole while simultaneously trying to outmaneuver his political opponents and crafty assassins. Angst!

The problem I have with Messiah is that it suffers acutely from a kind of talking head syndrome. It's not until the back sixth or so of the book that anything interesting happens. Dune had sword fights, skirmishes, Paul and his mother tromping around the deadly desert of Arrakis meeting and learning about the Fremen, and all other kinds of adventures. Messiah devotes literally dozens of pages at a time to sitting in a room listening to conspirators talk to each other. And then talking about what the talking means. And then thinking about what the talking about the talking means. It's terrible and jarring to see how Herbert has switched gears so abruptly from fascinating adventure and world building to stark exposition and naval gazing.

Not that some of the ideas aren't interesting. The way that Paul must grapple with his precognition and how he has to grasp at things to try and leave humanity on the path to survival in the wake of his inevitable fall is a complex and fascinating idea, for one. And I liked the idea of how his strengths are the things that ultimately do him in --sometimes literally. It's just that I wish Herbert had found ways to make this story less tedious in its execution.

Is the third book any better? I'm on the fence at this point.

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### Evgeny says

Twelve years have passed since the events of the last book. Paul Atreides became an Emperor of the major part of the inhabited space worlds residing on planet Arrakis aka Dune. The Jihad he launched enveloped lots of planets and Paul realized it is often so much easier to start something than put an end to it. Literally everybody and their brother with even residual lust for power decided Paul the Emperor had overstayed his welcome; the time for good old conspiracies of all sorts had come.

The first thing that came to my mind and stayed there through the whole reading was the radical change of the meaning of word Jihad since the book publication. It completely lost its mystique and became synonymous with expression "lots of innocents killed just because, often brutally". For this reason my

perception of Paul was different from what the author intended even though I tried to keep in mind the original intention of Frank Herbert.

Before I wrote my review I looked though those of other people and one person really nailed it. I could not have said it better myself and so I just repeat it here. Paul feels exactly like Harry Potter (hard to believe the comparison, is not it?) from Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix.

I even included the image of the book for you to make sure you read it right. They are both full of angst. At least the Hogwarts student has a legitimate excuse: he is of the right age which Paul should have overgrown a long time ago. A conclusion follows: if you like fifth installment of Harry Potter for its angst, this book is for you.

The first book has shown us the great world that feels alive. It had action, adventure, and flat characters with a sole exception of Paul himself (I could also include Jessica here given enough pressure to do so). The good (?) news is the quality of the characters remained the same; some of the promising ones are gone into background never to appear explicitly here.

Of action and adventure there was no trace left. The only part which could be called action (I am really stretching the definition here) took about a couple of pages total. So what exactly was going on during 200+ remaining pages? Paul's inaction, this is what.

Let me explain. Paul could see the future. Well, except the times when he could not see it not to spoil the plot device. So he knew about a conspiracy, for example. He also knew about its main people. He could also see that removing main conspirator A would mean Really Bad Things for Paul down the road. The same can be said about conspirator B. At this point I have no idea why not to remove **all** of the conspirators. This would take care of the whole problem, would not it? Paul, apparently having never heard about a man being a master of his destiny, decided to remain passive. Angst ensures.

I am afraid I made this book sound much worse than it actually is. After all, it is still *Dune*

and some interesting developments took place. It did set the scene for interesting things to come and my resolve to continue with the series has not weakened any. It is just that I expected something different from this book.

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## Laura says

So I thought *Dune* was the best thing since the bound codex, right? And I read it about five times over the course of my young-adulthood. And then I read *Messiah* and was pretty much completely dissatisfied. Not enough to give it a poor rating, since it is interesting (I mean, we all still care about Paul, even if he is a whiner) and it did keep my attention.

You haven't seen foreshadowing until you've read *Dune Messiah*. It takes that to a whole new, grotesque level. And pretentiousness. Thought *Dune* was pretentious? Hah! This one makes *Dune* look like a chimney-sweep in comparison. It's as though Frank Herbert managed to make a blunt weapon out of pretentiousness and use it directly on the reader's mind.

My final impression was of just another massive philosophical acid trip consisting of a bunch of people smarter than me bandying hints and portentous minutiae in the middle of a half-realized desert wonderland for over three hundred pages. And I didn't really care about Duncan Idaho, anyway, since he was only in

Dune for like forty pages and he only spoke about twice. Telling me ten times in a row that Paul really really liked Idaho is not going to make me feel the same way about him, Frank Herbert! Now I'm afraid to read number three.

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### Nicholas West says

When I first read *Dune Messiah*, it was nearly twenty years ago and like a lot things time had erased most of the details from my brain - including the ending.

So digging into it last week was a treat; felt like something new. From re-discovering characters and themes, to gaining an understanding that my seventeen-year-old brain wasn't able to yet comprehend.

As a note on my assessment style: Part of me wants to respond to other reviewers here on Goodreads concerning their literary criticisms. However, I've found that to be a self-defeating endeavor. I come from the school of: A review should stand on its own merits. But I have a little cheat here - I can respond to what my younger self thought of *Dune Messiah*. The Nick West of twenty years ago did have some criticisms of this book that may have been rooted in misunderstanding — and at the very least, a sense of disappointment or superb literary let-down. As I respond to Nick of the 90s, you can parallel similar themes in other 2 and 3 star reviews on this site.

So here we are: You the reader, Nicholas at age 37, and Nick at age 17. Let's chat.

\*\*(There is one specific thing I do want to address concerning other reviews, because it's a weirdly specific critique that pops up a bunch of times. But we'll get there in a minute.)\*\*\*

Off the top here, I loved this book. I had it on my Goodreads for 10 days, but really I ate up the bulk of the text in a three day page-burner.

Here's something that Nick, age 17, could not fully realize about *Dune Messiah*: This is a novel for grown ups. Gone is the fairy-tale magic of a young man forced into extraordinary circumstances. Gone are any aspects to the beginnings of the hero's journey.

Instead, we get the biggest realization that Nicholas at age 37 has had about the *Dune* series: Those aspects of fantasy and science fiction tropes that got me into the story, seemingly became absent concepts in Book Two. While not incidental, those surface elements are incidentally the thing that I got hung up on the first time I read this series. And they weren't even the most important things in the saga.

Frank Herbert has this reputation for making *Dune* some impenetrable document as rigid, complicated, and vengeful as the Old Testament. But that's a bad rap. On the surface, the first *Dune* book was a seemingly simple story of betrayal and revenge. The world building, interpersonal relationships, religious philosophies, and political intrigue are as deep as anything ever put into fiction. (The vengeful part is, however, accurate.)

So, when teenage Nick finished *Dune*; what felt like the most epic journey my imagination had ever been on, only to crack open the next book and feel like I was thrust into the pages of a bad pulp novel, it felt a bit confusing.

I read the prologue which contained on-the-nose dialogues by some nameless jailer and a historian. Okay? —

The empire of Paul Maud'dib has a Spanish Inquisition team?

The next chapter introduced me to Face Dancers, gaseous fish-men, and a conspiracy to kick the book into gear — It is a little pulpy. But the Harkonnens are pretty damn pulpy too. As adversaries they are supervillain-gaga. Maybe you just missed it missed it because of how epic the story was around them.

Geez, young Nick, you didn't realize it was pulp all along. With a healthy dose of psychedelia and the best world building since Tolkien. As to the confusion of the prologue, turns out that's just a clever way to deliver exposition on what became of the Universe since Paul ascended to emperorship: It's been twelve years since the first book, etc...

Pulp might be the wrong word. But the heart of the matter is that Herbert had a vision (visions!) in which he used *Dune*, Book One, to dip a toe in, or maybe a foot. But with *Dune Messiah*, we definitely went waist deep. What's third base in a swimming mixed metaphor? I think Frank Herbert reached his hand down my pants from a psychedelic standpoint.

But I'm skipping ahead. Nick at 17 was let down. My expectations had been subverted. *Dune Messiah* isn't about the Shakespearean characters performing hyper-slick action scenes. No. Book Two in the series is much more contemplative. We jump into new dramas between old characters and fresh faces. And yes, teenage Nick, there is a hell of a lot of talking. But to call that boring or hard to follow betrays an unrefined mind, kid. This novel is a procedural of emotion, passion, pleasure, the struggle with mortality — you know, the human condition — Not only did Frank Herbert up his literary game; he did so with a brevity and beauty that was perfect for this story. And what we think of as a slow burn actually has new twists and intrigues on practically every other page. If you pay attention, which the writing makes easy to do, the payoff is a powerful one indeed.

On that note: Paul Maud'dib is dealing with some heavy stuff as Emperor of the known Universe. He had allowed (Or he claimed it as out of his control) a horrible Jihad to rage across the universe. This Holy War is what I struggled with the most both times I read the novel — and perhaps Herbert was using this as a way to expand the reader's consciousness? (This is a meta theory if you tie it into the Ghola/Hayt/Duncan Idaho's fate. Whoa. There's a thesis, man...) You really have to open up new channels of thought to figure out why Paul could not stop evil from being done in the Atreides name. Was there really was no order of events or commands that could've stopped the Fremen conquerers?

(view spoiler)

So now we get into the goods. Here's what makes this book such a killer, twelve-round-fight-with-a-knockout-punch, genius piece of literature.

Paul faces several huge problems that seem insurmountable. And he feels trapped by his prescience. If one could see the future and decided on a certain path, the sheer boredom would be brutal. But there is still too much fear for the boredom to kick in. There is a complicated conspiracy against him that is so powerful, even his knowledge of the plot cannot stop its machinations. Paul must produce an heir. If this is done improperly, the love of his life would be tortured and turned into a slave. the Jihad must be stopped. The unbalanced government fueled by religious zealots needs to be set on a more progressive track.

That's quite a tall order for 329 pages.

On top of that, we are told in the prologue about Paul's downfall. So now we're faced with a whodunnit?, or

more of a howdunnit? Will the conspirators win the day? Can Paul cement a legacy that reaches beyond violence? Can Chani bear a child that lives?

So we sit through all the meetings, and conversations that take place jumping between multiple points-of-view. We delve into character's deepest thoughts, passions, desires, and inadequacies — something that Herbert can actually pull off. What could have been a mess of massive internal dialogues, instead becomes a string, a chord, and finally a cable pulling the reader forward page by page. Yes, young Nick. How could you understand the anxiety a father feels for his children? Or a husband for his wife of more than a decade? You really can't. Frank Herbert wrote a book for grown ups. And when you're all grown up, you might catch a bit of what was trying to be conveyed. All the while being heaped with a massive dose of trippy visions pulling you into the undertow of genetic and higher-thinking philosophies.

(view spoiler)

You try writing something half as spectacular.

So, teenage Nick, give it some time, buddy. *Dune Messiah* comes highly recommended from you, a man who has changed a little bit over the last twenty years.

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\*\*Finally here's that weird note that pops up in a bunch of Goodreads reviews. I'll go ahead and quote some actual reviews here (Of course, I'm not going to call out individual names. I'm not here to pick a fight. These reviewers have just as much validity in their feelings towards the book as I do.) **Bolds** added by me.—

“I'm realizing there's not much to this book. It simply **bridges** the first and third.”

“After re-reading Dune recently, I decided to finally get around to reading Dune Messiah - the sequel to Dune and the **bridge** to Children of Dune.”

“I read in reviews all over the Internet that it was boring that it was basically only a **bridge** between DUNE and CHILDREN OF DUNE.”

“For me Dune Messiah acts as a slightly dull (but not too shabby) **bridge** to go on to the original trilogy's grand finale Children of Dune”

(This next one says the same thing but surprisingly doesn't use the key word, **BRIDGE**. Seriously, what is going on here?)

“The feel of the book is like a prelude to what comes next, that the third book will be the true sequel to Dune.”

“This is not to say I didn't love the book -- far from it! It definitely feels like a **bridging** book between "Dune" and "Children of Dune””

You get the point. At least 30 different reviews used this terminology in my quick scan.

Firstly: What the hell is going on? Did everyone read each other's reviews and just spew the same points

using their own re-ordered sentences? Is there some secret *Dune*-whisperer-critic that said this is a “bridge” novel and that became reality for everyone else? Seriously, wtf?

Secondly: I think most of these folks are wrong. You could stop the series at *Dune Messiah* and have a really satisfying ending to Paul’s journey. Honestly, *Messiah* is one of the best damn endings I’ve ever read. It’s a magic trick where the cards are face up the whole time and you’re still left wondering how Frank Herbert pulled it off.

Good stuff, Mr. Herbert. Young Nick, ignore these “bridge” acolytes. I don’t trust ‘em. :P

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### **Timothy Urges says**

*You stand in a valley between dunes. I stand on the crest. I see where you do not see. And, among other things, I see mountains which conceal distances.*

*All power is limited.*

Treasonous conspirators seek to destroy the emperor. And the deified emperor’s visions may cause self-destruction.

This book is slower than the first, with not much happening until the last third of the text. It seems more like a setup for the book that follows.

The world-building and mysticism make these books worth the effort. Finally meeting a steersman and other lifeforms has me interested in learning more. I look forward to the next installment.

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### **Manny says**

You know what it’s like. Every decision seems so obviously sensible, but one thing just leads to another. We’ve all had it happen to us.

So, last time I had my family murdered by our hereditary enemies, I went into hiding in the desert too, and linked up with the tough native fighters there. I mean, who wouldn’t? Since I had psychic powers, it seemed pretty crazy not to use them to gain some respect. Before I knew what had happened, I was the clan’s leader. And, you get some momentum, you want to keep it up, otherwise you just go backwards. Suddenly I found I was ruling the planet. I didn’t expect it to be quite so easy to conquer the known Universe, but that bit always catches you by surprise.

On the way, I met this girl. I liked her, she liked me, well, you know how these things happen. She gets pregnant. Then, shit, I go and *of course* lose my sight in some kind of nuclear attack. I’m just kicking myself for being so careless. Girlfriend dies in childbirth, par for the course, and since she has twins all my psychic powers are gone. I keep meaning to find out why that happens, but I never get round to it.

Oh well, I guess I’ll be left to die in the wilderness as usual, and the kids will turn into godlike mutant sandworms. Never mind. I’ll try to do better next time.

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## Hasham Rasool says

This book is very different from the first book, 'Dune' because this book has focused about the religion. 'Dune' has focused the world a lot.

At the first, I wasn't sure whether this book would be good. The reason I have doubted it because I wasn't sure how the writer has written towards Islam. He has done very well.

I am really enjoyed reading this book Alhamdulillah.

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## Markus says

### Buddy read with Athena!

*"Once more the drama begins."*

- The Emperor Paul Muad'dib on his ascension to the Lion Throne

Twelve years have passed since the Battle of Arrakeen, where Paul Atreides wrestled the Imperium from the hands of the Padishah Emperor, and seized the Lion Throne for himself. Dune has become the political and economical centre of the universe, and the Qizarate priesthood has spread Muad'dib's name throughout space and turned him into not only an emperor with absolute power, but a god in his own right.

Yet there are those who would topple the god emperor from his religious throne. In the grand circles of power, a new conspiracy arises from the shadows. Its goals and ambitions are many, and it seeks to infiltrate the ranks of the Atreides and the Fremen, striking at those closest to the emperor in order to remove him from power. And each step brings its plans closer to succeeding.

*"Mysterious, lethal, an oracle without eyes,  
Catspaw of prophecy, whose voice never dies!"*

*Dune Messiah* is, in many ways, even better than *Dune*. It cannot stand up to the wonder of discovering the world of Arrakis for the first time, but it certainly has other strengths. The setting and the writing style is mostly the same as in the first book. The story though, has changed dramatically. The first book is about Paul Atreides and his quest for vengeance against those who betrayed his family and seized their land. The second book is about managing an empire and protecting it from a devilishly dangerous conspiracy who shuns no means to achieve what they want. There is more political maneuvering, more hidden agendas, and more excitement for the reader.

The character have also grown more interesting in the second book. Paul, Chani and Irulan are all older and more experienced in the games of power, and were much more enjoyable to read about than they were in the first one. And perhaps the most fascinating character of them all is Alia, Paul's sister. Still only fifteen years of age, she is both a Reverend Mother of the Bene Gesserit, a leader of the Qizarate priesthood, and a powerful voice in the Imperial Council.

What truly made me decide to let this book keep the five stars from the first time I read it, was the ending. I will not go into details about it, but only say that this may be the most beautiful ending I have ever read in a sci-fi or fantasy book ever.

For those of you who have read *Dune* and are debating with yourselves whether or not to read its sequels, I hope this review will be helpful in deciding. For those of you who haven't read any of the books from this universe, know that it is in my eyes one of the greatest fictional series of all time. I would definitely recommend it to every single one of you, because it's a wonderful story with few equals in the world of science fiction.

*Such a rich store of myths enfolds Paul Muad'dib, the Mentat Emperor, and his sister, Alia, it is difficult to see the real persons behind these veils. But there were, after all, a man born Paul Atreides and a woman born Alia. Their flesh was subject to space and time. And even though their oracular powers placed them beyond the usual limits of time and space, they came from human stock. They experienced real events which left real traces upon a real universe. To understand them, it must be seen that their catastrophe was the catastrophe of all mankind. This work is dedicated, then, not to Muad'dib or his sister, but to their heirs - to all of us.*

- Dedication in the Muad'dib Concordance as copied from The Tabla Memorium of the Mahdi Spirit Cult

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### **Derek says**

Never has my fickle reader's heart been as frustrated and wrenched as it was while reading *Dune Messiah*. I must have put it down and swore not to pick it up again at least three or four times, but if you know anything about *Dune*, that's a declaration you can't follow through on. The *Dune Chronicles* just keeps getting better and better, this was probably Paul's greatest test, and damn, what a prolific writer Frank Herbert is, telling us the reader exactly what evil is being planned against the Atreides and letting us hope and trust Paul's prescience to get him through it all. What a Bravo ending after such a trying tour de force of a build up. It's sad what happens to Channi and to Paul himself, but the sadness doesn't take away from the masterpiece that's the rest of the novel. It's written so well you almost accept it as a kindness.

This is a book, like Paul Atreides himself, that I won't forget, not for a long time. A masterpiece.

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### **Lyn says**

Only half the length of the original *Dune*, the second book in the series takes place 12 years after.

Not as epic, this is almost like a chamber western, with political intrigue and references to great goings on, but little action described. The feel of the book is like a prelude to what comes next, that the third book will be the true sequel to *Dune*.

For fans of *Dune*, no doubt, and you really need to have read *Dune* first, to know the characters and to at least have a clue about Herbert's complex and intricately detailed world building.

But then, comparing this book to *Dune* is like comparing a country lawyer to a Supreme Court justice, the

comparison itself is unfair, very few books will equal Dune or even come close. Dune Messiah is part of Herbert's great vision and is a good book in its own right.

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## **Eric Allen says**

Dune Messiah  
By Frank Herbert

A Dune Retrospective by Eric Allen

Four years after the publication of Dune, those who cried out for a sequel were finally answered. Frank Herbert returned to Arrakis for a book that was very different from the action packed first volume of the series, but at the same time, still held a lot of the familiar. When I tell people that I actually enjoyed the sequel to Dune more than the original, the answer I get from the overwhelming majority is, "Wait . . . Dune has a sequel?" People know of Dune nowadays through the 1984 cult classic movie. Some people may be vaguely aware that the movie was based on a book, but never bothered to pick it up or look for sequels. Which is a shame, because they're missing out on this little gem of a book.

Twelve years after taking the throne of the empire for himself in Dune, Paul "Muad'Dib" Atreides has become something of a God, or Savior figure to the Fremen, who have taken up arms and spread out throughout the entire known universe bringing a Holy War to subjugate all beneath his rule. All of this, very much against Paul's own wishes. He has become a figurehead, standing atop the empire as Emperor, while priests of the religion that worships him rule in his name. He has made good his promise to begin turning Dune into a paradise, and now the desert runs freely with water. Another sign to his followers of his godhood.

Princess Irulan, Paul's trophy wife, and the means by which he secured the throne is anxious to follow her Bene Gesserit orders to bear the royal heir, but Paul has no love for her and refuses it to her, instead remaining true to his real, Fremen wife Chani. This leads Irulan to join a conspiracy against the Emperor, meant to discredit him, destroy his reputation, and take the wind out of the Fremen Zealots' sails. Out of spite, she has been feeding Chani contraceptives to prevent her from ever bearing Paul an heir, but this plan failed, and Chani conceived anyway.

(view spoiler)

The Good? Again, Frank Herbert did a ridiculous amount of research before writing this book. It shows in how he truly understands the mechanics of economics, politics, and religion. The religion that he has built up around Paul is intriguing, and realistic, and the atrocities that its zealots commit in his name feel logical, and realistic as well.

Paul's suffering under the burden of the sins of those who follow him is really well done. This book is more a character study on him, than really anything else, showing the impact his actions have had on him as a person. This is a very different kind of book than the first in the series. Where the first book was all about

war, this one is all about the consequences of it on the man that started it all. Despite its short length, this book has a very big and important message, and it delivers it exquisitely. Many people tend to complain that this book is rather boring after the first one, but I found Paul's inner struggles to be just as, or perhaps even more entertaining than the battles of conquest and Paul's coming of age, etc from the first book.

This book is remarkably better written and put together than the first book. Not only did Frank Herbert apparently do quite a bit of research in the four years between books, but he also improved on his skills as a writer quite a bit. The storyline is tighter, less convoluted and far less confusing than that of the first book. It almost reads like something written by a completely different writer because of the increased quality of the writing, and the change of focus, but at the same time, it still has his unique style and flair to it.

The Bad? I have never liked the Third Person Omniscient perspective that Frank Herbert uses. This is where the story is told by a narrator in third person that will change viewpoints between characters at the drop of a hat, without warning when any given character has any important thoughts or observations on what's going on. I find it to be rather confusing and distracting at times, and I've always thought of the style as rather amateurish. This is wholly a point of opinion, and true, many very good books are written in this particular perspective, but I don't like it, and will always count it as a bad mark against any book it appears in.

Frank Herbert doesn't really seem to "get" female characters. He doesn't really seem to understand what motivates women, how they think, how they act, how they talk, and why they do the things that they do. Going by his female characters, one could almost say that he never met a real woman in his life. As such, they are basically just men with breasts. They have all the right girly bits, because someone in the universe has to, but the their minds and personalities are about the furthest thing from feminine as is possible. Back in the '60s this was a VERY common thing, which is getting somewhat better these days, but still lingers on. Frank Herbert's portrayal of women fits those of the times, but to anyone that might be, or has ever actually met, a real woman before, it's going to feel a bit off. Back in the day this sort of thing was acceptable, but I find it to be annoying and distracting, if not downright offensive, in this day and age.

In conclusion, *Dune Messiah* is a VERY different type of book than its predecessor *Dune*, and it does have its vices, but the good more than outweighs the bad by far. The focus on Paul's dilemma with the Jihad that he inadvertently started is spectacular. Watching his inner turmoil over the countless billions that have died in his name play out is excellent. And if the female characters are off, everything else is dead on. He's created a fantastic world, with fantastic people (if you think of them all as men, anyway) to live in it, and did a great deal of research to make everything from the economics to the religion feel realistic. As an entry in the *Dune* Saga, it's probably one of the best.

Check out my other reviews.

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## Apatt says

I don't normally look at reviews of a book prior to writing my own take on it, but sometime I just draw a blank after finishing a book. Some books are harder to review than others, sometime because I feel ambivalent about them, sometime I don't fully understand them, and sometime I don't know the reason, they just are. After finishing *Dune Messiah* I feel like I need some kind of launching pad to start off the review, some inspiration or perhaps I will resort to simply ripping off somebody's review wholesale (unfortunately Cecily has not reviewed this one yet so I'll pass on the last option ;)

Dune, as you are undoubtedly aware, is probably the most famous sci-fi novel of all time. *Dune Messiah* is like Frank Herbert's equivalent of Michael Jackson's "Bad" album in that it has to follow up a once in a lifetime mega hit and is doomed to come up short. Having read the book I do not get the feeling that Frank Herbert was feeling under pressure to match Dune's success. Perhaps authors are not subject to the same level of pressure as pop stars.

At around 340 pages *Dune Messiah* is about half the length of *Dune*, it is also very different in tone and pacing. It starts off twelve years after the events of *Dune*. Our literally know it all hero Paul "Muad'Dib" Atreides is now Emperor of the known universe and is having a suitably heroic melancholic time of it on account of the jihad which caused billions of death in his name. In the meantime powerful enemies are ganging up to snuff him out because he is too powerful, he is literally a know-it-all thanks to his oracular powers, and nobody likes a smartass. His ~~wife~~ concubine can not have a baby because his legal wife slipped her some contraceptive (and oracular powers apparently do not cover food additives). To make matters worse (or perhaps better) his dead teacher Duncan Idaho is returned to him as a sort of clone (ghola) with a suspicious mission and a new highly ominous name of Hayt. With all the odds stacked against him how can he survive? With panache of course!

The first third of the book is very interesting with all the aforementioned odds being piled up against Paul, then the pacing of the book begin to sag with a lot of ruminations and philosophizing by the major characters and my mind drifted off to parts unknown. After a rather dry 100 or so pages the plot revives quite a bit and the climax is quite thrilling (if not exactly unpredictable).

This book clearly has a lot of depth, themes and subtexts, unfortunately its profundity mostly escaped me as profundities tend to do. One of the Amazon reviewers mentioned that the book is so profound while reading it he frequently had to stop to think about what Herbert was *really* saying. The stoppages I made are mostly to do with thinking about my options for lunch and other mundane things.

The two central characters are less compelling than they were in the previous book, Paul is all broody and miserable, his sister Alia goes through mood swings between being supernaturally sage, overly shrill and a teenager with a crush. Hayt/Idaho is pretty cool though, is he or isn't he? Of course he is!

For me *Dune Messiah* acts as a slightly dull (but not too shabby) bridge to go on to the original trilogy's grand finale *Children of Dune* which is brilliant by all accounts and I am looking forward to reading soonish.

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## Penny says

This was a good sequel to a great book, which is actually harder to pull off than we give authors credit for. When they set the bar so high with an exceptional first novel in a series they're expected to meet or better it which is not an easy task. I think it was very well done in this case.

12 years have passed since the end of Dune. We're thrust into a world where the long term consequences of actions taken in the first book are evident and seldom what we expected or what was intended.

There were two main points that really struck me about this book. The first was that the commentary on government and power was well developed and thoughtfully presented. The other was the way in which seeing the future as a sequence of possibilities all changed by small actions was presented. Usually the future is one thing and fate or destiny allow multiple paths but only one outcome. I've always found this hard to

accept and find Herbert's way of dealing with knowing the future far better thought out.

I look forward to continuing the series.

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### **Michael Finocchiaro says**

Having re-read Dune (and reviewed it here on GR) recently, I figured I should continue and read at least the initial trilogy with Dune Messiah and Children of Dune to get a better idea of the world that Frank Herbert created. I am glad that I read Dune Messiah. It is an excellent novel about destiny and fate and how much of it we can control. We get more insight into the Navigators - here I noticed that, unlike in Dune, we actually meet a Navigator (one of the three primary conspirators against Paul Maud'dib) which means that David Lynch must have read this book as well before making his cult classic movie of the first book. We also learn more about the Bene Gesserits and the Mentats. I found it particularly fascinating that the Butlerian Jihad, which takes place a few hundred years before the action in Dune and Dune Messiah, was actually, if I understood correctly, a war of humans against machines which the humans won. Following this victory, computers were banished from the known universe and instead Mentats and Navigators (inspired by melange made from spice) were bred to be human computers for political and financial strategy in the former case, and for navigation in space-time for the latter. This fascinated me because I have read and watched so much science fiction where the machines win (or are winning) such as in Ghost in the Shell or Neuromancer, or Blade Runner, or Hyperion and Dune is one of the rare universes where humans won and yet, at what cost? Banning machines seems to have brought humans back to a medieval society with its aristocracies (House Corrino, House Harkonen, House Atreides) and oppression and genetic manipulation (Bene Gesserit). And once the Fremen rally around Paul to destroy two of the three houses and install Paul as the new Emperor and as the Dune Messiah, is this new regime really a new start for humanity or just another autocratic regime. It sure looks like that latter and we get inklings of this as the Fremen go spread the Gospel of their Maud'dib and subsequently spilling not just a little blood. All of these things continue to torture Paul as they did in Dune and yet he is inevitably driven forward by this messianic destiny. Enter the conspiracy of a Bene Gesserit priestess, a rogue Navigator and a strange Face Dancer who want to topple Paul's regime, well more specifically kill his Fremen wife and force him to sleep with his sister Alia (ewww!!) so as to continue the genetic engineering project and re-install the old regime over which each had more control than under Paul. Another piece of the puzzle here is the reappearance of Duncan Idaho, mentor and friend to Paul as a Zensunni master which has unintended consequences. Zensunnism in itself is a fascinating blend of Sunni Islam and Zen Buddhism that also is followed by the Fremen. In essence, Herbert created a universe where classic monarchical hegemonies come into conflict with religious fanatics - in a sense we can see the Fremen hordes as marauding Zen Buddhist priests in ancient Japan fighting the Emperor, well that is one image that came into my mind anyway, so as not to wear out the old Western capitalism vs Islamic obscurantism trope.

While perhaps less expansive and mind-blowing than the first Dune, Dune Messiah still delivers punches as a great plot with convincing characters and lots of philosophical questions. On to Children of Dune!

I have since finished the whole canonical series and enjoyed all of it.

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### **Stephen says**

5.0 stars. Second volume in the superb Dune series. I actually liked this volume even more than Dune. If

possible I would recommend listening to the audio version of this series as the production value is amazing.  
**HIGHEST POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION!!!!**

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