The Babylonian Exile shaped the future

Doug Mason
Figure 1: Structure of “The Babylonian Exile shaped the future”
Figure 2: Scope of “The Babylonian Exile shaped the future”
The Babylonian Exile shaped the future

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OUTLINE AND SUMMARY

Like a stone lightly skipping across deep, moving waters, this Study skips across the 2500 year shadow cast by the Babylonian Exile, across the origins of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism, and through the intervening centuries to the present. Each subject briefly touched on in this Study deserves deep study and contemplative, respectful thought.

This Study simply provides a model. Consult at least the books I have listed. Enjoy the excitement of anticipation and discovery, and make up your own mind. No reader will accept everything I present, and that is as it should be. Each of us brings a different life experience, a different mindset. If I help someone’s journey, there can be no greater joy for me, even when you disagree with me.

The outcomes must be personal and genuinely held and like the moving waters, all outcomes must ever remain open to development and growth, with the tolerance and acceptance that no two people are at the same point on the same path.

Previous Studies of mine have touched on the human stories of the times before the Exile (GOD in the Beginning¹) and of the times at the formation of the Christian Church’s canon of sacred Scriptures (Why Does the Watchtower Society Accept Christendom’s Scriptures²). With those Studies, as with this one, I am interested in the human processes that were involved—the cultures, the politics, the humanity—rather than delving deeply into exegeses of the contents of the material they produced.

In the 6th century BCE, Babylon had subjugated the tiny nation of Judah, ultimately destroying its capital and its temple where their Lord resided. Judah’s prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah promised that God would rebuild the city, restore his chosen people to the rightful position that their relationship with him deserved, and David’s throne would always remain occupied. The centuries passed, millennia passed, but Israel and Judah remained trodden down by powerful Gentile nations.

Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s promises continued to remain unfulfilled and the shadow cast by the Babylonian Exile continued to influence history. The shadow of the promises made to the Exiles influenced the shape and content of the sacred Hebrew Scriptures and Christian Scriptures, which continue to exert a deep influence on cultures and on history.

Repeated Last-Day communities continually repeated the anticipation, announcing that the promises would be fulfilled, and this would take place during their own lifetime. Such communities would not countenance the thought that the prophets’ promises could fail.

Many Christians perceive that these ancient Biblical prophecies and promises are being fulfilled before their 21st century eyes. Some see such events as being portents of Christ’s imminent Coming. Some see these events as essential to enable Jesus to come. Last-Day communities have been seen in every age, right through to this very moment. History records the failure of each expectation; they are forever renewed, but never fulfilled.

¹ Available at: http://www.jwstudies.com/GOD_in_the_beginning.pdf
² Available at: http://www.jwstudies.com/Why_Does_WTS_Accept_Christendoms_Scriptures.pdf
Major Sections of this Study

I. PROMISES TO THE EXILES
II. PROMISES PRODUCED POST-EXILIC ACTION
III. UNFULFILLED PROMISES PRODUCED CHANGE
IV. PROMISES EXTENDED TO THE GENTILES
V. PROMISES KEEP BEING REPEATED

Theme

The theme of this Study is simple:

• The Hebrews considered themselves to be “God’s Chosen People”, yet Israel had been dispersed by the Assyrians and Judah was dominated by Egypt and then by Babylon.

• In response to Judah’s captivity, its prophets promised the nation that God would restore them to their rightful position and that God would forever maintain the throne of David.

• When exiles returned from Babylon, they set about creating a nation that was faithful to God.

• Centuries passed but the Hebrews remained oppressed by successive Gentile powers. In response, the Jews anticipated imminent divine intervention.

• Followers of Jesus Christ applied the prophets’ promises to their leaders and to themselves, anticipating an imminent divine intervention.

• In every succeeding century, people kept expecting divine intervention during their life.

In this way, the neo-Babylonian Exile casts its shadow forward throughout history.

Bonus feature!

This Study traces the influence that the captivity and exile of Judah exerted on history, and how it continues to do so.

Some one hundred or so years before Babylon exerted its might, Judah’s neighbour Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians, its people scattered throughout other nations. This earlier destruction also plays a part in history, including today.

In the recent past, a particular nation believed that the mantle of Israel had been transferred to it. This resulted in its capital being considered the New Jerusalem, with all that this entailed.

The intriguing story is touched on briefly as a Bonus at the conclusion of this Study.

Added emphases

Note that on occasions I add underlining for emphasis. For extra emphasis, on a few occasions I add emphasis to the underlining through the use of bold and shading. Italics are as in the original sources.

The “Contents” listing provides a detailed Outline and Summary
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Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard who served the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem. He burned the house of the LORD, the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. All the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down all the walls around Jerusalem.³

How lonely sits the city
that once was full of people!
How like a widow she has become,
she that was great among the nations!
She that was a princess among the provinces
has become a vassal. …

Judah has gone into exile with suffering
and hard servitude;
she lives now among the nations,
and finds no resting place;
her pursuers have all overtaken her
in the midst of her distress.⁴

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³ Jeremiah 52:12-14, NRSV
⁴ Lamentations 1:1, 3, NRSV
# REFERENCES CITED IN THIS STUDY

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## RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

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I Promises to the Exiles

I. PROMISES TO THE EXILES

Events

Babylonian Exile.
6th BCE

People

Ezekiel.
Jeremiah.
Baruch.
6th BCE

Writings

Ezekiel.
Isaiah 40-55.
Deuteronomic History.
6th BCE

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I Promises to the Exiles

THE EXILES

Little documented evidence of the exilic period

The period that followed the disasters of 587 B.C. is the hardest for us to know. Even though it is more recent than the other periods I have described, it is the hardest to write about. There are two reasons for this. The first is simply the lack of sources. Neither the Bible nor archeology has told us very much.

There is very little in the narrative books of the Bible that tells us about what happened to the generation of exiles and refugees from Judah. The story ends in the books of Kings and Chronicles with the fall of the kingdom, and the next books of historical narrative in the Bible (Ezra and Nehemiah) pick up the story fifty years later. There is very little information, biblical or extrabiblical, relating to the exilic period or the conditions under which the deportees and those left behind in Judah lived during the period of Babylonian domination, although there is some archaeological evidence that at least some of those who remained in Judah were able to prosper to some extent. Jeremiah and Ezekiel provide glimpses of how the early years of the exiles were perceived, and Deutero-Isaiah the latter years. There are also references in Babylonian texts to the rations provided for Jehoiachin of Judah and to prosperous Jews who were later running businesses in Babylonia. And we know that centuries later there was still a Jewish community there. In light of this scarcity of information, it is interesting that scholarly constructs have created such a forceful picture of intensive religious and literary activity, particularly on the part of the exiles.

Neither Biblical accounts nor archaeology have much to contribute about the period following the destruction of 587 BCE. Although the archaeological evidence from the period of the Babylonian exile is limited, sites such as Jerusalem, Tel Beit Mirsim, and Lachish were clearly destroyed toward the beginning of the sixth century B.C.E. However, evidence from other sites in the northern part of Judah and Benjamin, some with continued occupation (for example, Tell el-Fol, En-Gedi, Gibeon, Tell en-Nasbeh, Bethel) and some new, suggests that some portions of the Judean population were not affected by the Babylonian campaigns there, and in fact were prospering in the late sixth century. The continued use of burial caves in the Hinnom Valley is cited as evidence for the continued occupation of Jerusalem during the exile.

Exiles mostly came from Jerusalem and its environs

It is now estimated that only 5% to 20% of the population was deported to Babylonia. Most of the people, especially those from rural areas were not removed, and the exiles came mainly from Jerusalem and its environs. This was the area called Yahud, comprised mainly of the Judean hills. The boundaries of the area can be reconstructed archaeologically by the seal impressions with the name Yahud. Several hundred of these have been found in Jerusalem and at sites within 15 to 20 miles to the north and south of the city. It is from the word Yahud that the name Yehudim or Jews was derived. Yahud remained under Persian control for two centuries, until the conquest of Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.E (Finkelstein and Silberman 2002, p. 315).

Deprived of the temple, the exiles laid emphasis on the observation of the Sabbath, the laws of purity, prayer and confession (Da 9; Ezr 9; Ne 9), and fasting to commemorate the tragic events of the Babylonian attacks (Zec 7:3, 5; 8:19). Great stress was laid on studying and expounding the Torah, as we see in the calling of Ezra the scribe (Ezr 7:6), “a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses.”

5 Who Wrote?, page 150
6 Reconstructing Society, page 186
7 Archaeology, Alpert, page 77
8 Reconstructing Society, page 185
9 Archaeology, Alpert, page 79
10 EBC, Chronicles-Job, page 344
Exiles permitted to settle in their own groups

The Babylonian policy of allowing exiled groups to settle in their own separate communities almost certainly facilitated their being able to maintain a sense of group identity, something that may have been of less concern for those who remained behind and were able to hold on to their ties to the land. Some of the basic substructures of society, such as the institution of the elders, also seem to have remained intact, as is suggested in Jeremiah and Ezekiel and in the continuity implied in postexilic texts.\(^{11}\)

Physical conditions in exile apparently were acceptable to many Jews. The Babylonians were not bent on punishing conquered people, but merely took steps to ward off revolutions. The more cruel Assyrians carried out a policy of displacing populations, breaking up and scattering them, and leaving them to lose their national identity through intermarriage and other forms of absorption. By contrast, the Babylonians deported peoples in small groups and allowed them to preserve their national identities. (Hence the Judeans were permitted to return from exile, whereas most of the members of the ten “lost tribes” of the northern kingdom had become absorbed.) Jeremiah advised a policy of “business as usual” in captivity (Jer. 29:4-7), and this apparently was followed by the exiles. Before long, Jews were found in mercantile ventures. When the opportunity came to return to Jerusalem, many preferred to stay in Babylonia. Their choice marked the beginning of the Jewish center that later produced the Babylonian Talmud, a massive compendium of Jewish law completed in the sixth century A.D.\(^{12}\)

Initially, no doubt, the exiles were saddened and disoriented in their enforced exile, as poignantly expressed in Psalm 137:1-6. Once the exiles were transported to their new homes, most were not reduced to a position of abject slavery but had considerable freedom. Though the Babylonians did use slaves, they had more than enough of them from natural reproduction. Some exiles became dependents of the palace or the temples; they worked the lands that belonged to these institutions. ... The exiles must have maintained some cohesion as members of local communities. ... The descendants of the exiles evidently prospered, since those who returned brought with them numerous servants and animals and were able to make contributions for the sacred services (Ezr 2:65-69; 8:26-27; Ne 7:70-72).

Ezekiel provides an important source for what life was like in exile. ... He was married (Eze 24:18) and had his own house (8:1). He refers to both the elders of the house of Judah (8:1) and the elders of the house of Israel (14:1; 20:1), who met with him.\(^{13}\)

The Jews appear as contracting parties, agents, witnesses, collectors of taxes, and royal officials. ... There seem to have been no social or commercial barriers between the Jews and the Babylonians. Their prosperous situation may explain why some chose to remain in Mesopotamia when the opportunity to return presented itself At the same time their growing confidence may explain why, as Bickerman has shown in his analysis, the proportion of Yahwistic names grew larger in the second generation.\(^{14}\)

One striking difference between the earlier Assyrian deportations and those of the Babylonians was that the former brought newcomers into the land of Israel, whereas the Babylonians did not do the same with the land of Judah.\(^{15}\)

Since it was the upper classes who were deported, thus leaving behind the poorest of the land (2Ki 25:12; Jer 39:10; 52:16) to work the vineyards and fields, it is not surprising that it was the returning exiles who provided the spiritual and political leadership that enabled Judaism to evolve.\(^{16}\)

Unlike those deported by the Assyrians from Israel, those deported by the Babylonians from Judah steadfastly retained their faith in Yahweh during the ordeal of their exile and maintained their identity

\(^{11}\) *Reconstructing Society*, page 187

\(^{12}\) *OT Survey*, page 357

\(^{13}\) *EBC, Chronicles-Job*, page 342

\(^{14}\) *EBC, Chronicles-Job*, page 343

\(^{15}\) *EBC, Chronicles-Job*, page 341

\(^{16}\) *EBC, Chronicles-Job*, page 341
as a distinct religious community. When the exiles returned, they revived an exclusive loyalty to Yahweh, which was no longer compromised by the worship of other gods. As Stern reports, since the beginning of the Persian era, not a single piece of evidence has been found for any pagan cults in Judah and Samaria.\(^\text{17}\)

The Jews were hardly alone in experiencing the hardships of an enforced exile. Nor were they alone in attempting to maintain their identity, inasmuch as groups such as the Egyptians also tried to do so. But all of them, with the exception of the Jews, were eventually assimilated and disappeared as recognizable entities.\(^\text{18}\)

### The religion of the Exiled Jews

Thousands of Jews — effectively, the elite — were “carried away captive” from Jerusalem to Babylon. “How lonely sits the city that was full of people the Lamentations of Jeremiah begins. “How like a widow has she become, she that was great among the nations . . . She weeps bitterly in the night.” The carrying off of the Jewish people from their cultic and cultural center was not an act of tyrannical whimsy but a deliberate attempt to eradicate their national identity. In Babylon, a city defined by altars and shrines to dozens of gods, life took its daily measure from second-nature gestures of worship. Mundane activities, from eating to copulation to bathing, involved rituals of deference to the divinities. In such a setting, the idea that a captive people could refuse to observe such cultic practice, and in so doing not only maintain but reinforce their distinct identity, was unthinkable. Yet that is what happened.

Jews in Babylon were confronted in that terrible circumstance with just how different they had become from other peoples. They did not start out that way. The similarity between the Hebrew religion and the religions of other Semitic peoples is reflected in the fact that the Jerusalem Temple and its rituals, both dating to Solomon and described in the Book of Kings, were strikingly like temples and rituals that archaeologists have uncovered elsewhere in the Middle East. Just as scholars now understand, as we saw, that tribal Israel came into being from within the tribes of Canaan (and not as an invading force from abroad), so the religion of the Hebrews began as a religion typical of broader Canaanite culture. But the Hebrew religion had evolved into something new. Israel’s God was new. …

In Babylon, forced into the presence of objects associated with other deities, captive Jews confronted how different their own notion of the divine had become. Their visceral refusal even to acknowledge the pagan gods, much less bow before them, was a first clear demonstration that they had become monotheists — believing not just that their God alone was to be worshiped, but that their God alone was real. …

Instead of forgetting where they came from, as kidnapped peoples typically and eventually did in the war zones of Mesopotamia, this people insisted on its memory. The implements of memory were the texts, songs, traditions, and stories the people had carried into exile with them. Indeed, these things were all they had, which is why they were understood anew. If the Psalms, for example, had begun as verses to be recited during the rituals of worship in the Jerusalem Temple, they were now recited alone, detached from ritual, with the words themselves understood as worship. The laws of purification that had been attached to the Temple’s sacrificial cult could now be observed for their own sake apart from the Temple; the laws themselves became the sacrifice. It was possible to draw close to God without the Temple, through story and law — through Torah, a Hebrew word that means teaching or instruction.\(^\text{19}\)

### The exiled Jews had to reformulate themselves

The Babylonian destruction of Judah had brought horrors and tremendous challenges and crises to this nation. They were forced to reformulate their picture of themselves and of their relationship with their God. They had to find a way to worship Yahweh without a Temple. They had to find leadership

\(^{17}\) EBC, Chronicles-Job, page 368  
\(^{18}\) EBC, Chronicles-Job, page 344  
\(^{19}\) Jerusalem, Jerusalem, pages 58, 59
without a king. They had to learn to live as a minority ethnic group in great empires. They had to determine what their relationship was to their homeland. And they had to live with their defeat.\textsuperscript{20}

**Expressed with sad literature their longing for home**

Were they content in exile? Whatever tranquillity or acceptance they found in Babylonia, the community still expressed longing for home. They \textit{instituted five annual fast days} to commemorate their misfortune. And they expressed their feelings in literature, which is preserved in several places in the Bible. The literature of the exile includes Psalm 137 and the book of Lamentations, as well as several sections from the prophets: the \textit{last part of the book of Jeremiah}, reflecting the refugees’ life in Egypt; and the entire book of Ezekiel and the latter part of the book of Isaiah, reflecting the exiles’ life in Babylonia. It is not happy literature. Some of it expresses bitterness. Much of it expresses guilt. (Why did this happen to us? It must be that we did something wrong.) Just about all of it expresses sadness. Psalm 137, written by a Judean poet and preserved by the community among their psalms, is one indicator of the experience of exile.\textsuperscript{21}

**Babylon appointed a local as Governor of Judah**

After the fall of Jerusalem, we are told in the biblical texts, the Babylonians appointed a native governor by the name of Gedaliah, who resided at Mizpah (presumably because Jerusalem was devastated) and was later assassinated during a revolt that resulted in further deportations. Land was probably redistributed among those who remained behind, creating a situation that apparently affected their relationship with the exiles once they returned following Cyrus’ edict. Several recent studies have argued that the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of elites most likely had only a minimal impact on those who remained in Judah, and that the social order remained essentially intact.\textsuperscript{22}

**Babylonians comprehended Israelite practice**

When we think of Old Testament religious concepts such as ritual sacrifice, sanctuaries/sacred space, priests and their role, creation, the nature of sin, communication with deity, and many other areas, we realize that the Babylonians would have found Israelite practice much more comprehensible than we do.\textsuperscript{23}

**Worship by the Exiles in Egypt**

Now that the Temple was destroyed, how were the people to worship God? The \textit{Egyptian group at Elephantine} actually built a Temple there—which was clearly against the law of centralization in Deuteronomy. The extraordinary thing about the Elephantine Temple is that they worshiped Yahweh and two other gods, one male and one female, there. The Jews in other parts of the world apparently were not happy with this development, because when the Elephantine Temple was destroyed in the fifth century they would not help rebuild it.\textsuperscript{24}

**JEREMIAH**

**Jeremiah, a tortured soul**

One gets an impression of Jeremiah from the book that is called by his name—both from the text and from between the lines. It is quite often an impression of a tortured man, spiritual, bound to his mission, rejected by humans, persecuted. He gives the impression that he would rather be doing anything else than his appointed task, that he wishes that he could not see the future, and that he could escape his present, even by death. He must tell the truth no matter what the consequences. People fear him. He is profoundly solitary. One thing that Jeremiah does \textit{not} appear to be is a fraud.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Who Wrote?}, page 155
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Who Wrote?}, page 152
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Reconstructing Society}, page 187
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ancient NE Thought}, page 24
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Who Wrote?}, page 154
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Who Wrote?}, page 149
Jeremiah’s promises to the exiles

Foreigners will no longer enslave them

“In that day,” declares the LORD Almighty, “I will break the yoke off their necks and will tear off their bonds; no longer will foreigners enslave them.”26

Declares the LORD, “I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob will again have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid.”27

The LORD, the God of Israel, says: “I will surely gather them from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety. They will be my people, and I will be their God.”28

“I am with you and will save you,” declares the LORD. “Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, I will not completely destroy you.”29

The LORD will heal them and restore them

“I will restore you to health and heal your wounds.” … This is what the LORD says: “I will restore the fortunes of Jacob’s tents and have compassion on his dwellings; the city will be rebuilt on her ruins, and the palace will stand in its proper place. From them will come songs of thanksgiving and the sound of rejoicing.”30

I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel. Again you will take up your tambourines and go out to dance with the joyful. Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit.31

They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back. I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because I am Israel’s father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son.32

In the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted, inhabited by neither men nor animals, there will be heard once more the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD, saying, “Give thanks to the LORD Almighty, for the LORD is good; his love endures forever.” For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before,’ says the LORD.33

God promised to enter into a new agreement with them

“The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.”34

This is what the LORD says: “If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time, then my covenant with David my servant—and my covenant with the Levites who are priests ministering before me—can be broken and David will no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne. I will make the descendants of David my servant and the Levites who minister before me as countless as the stars of the sky and as measureless as the sand on the seashore.”35

26 Jeremiah 30:8 (NIV)
27 Jeremiah 30:10 (NIV)
28 Jeremiah 32:36-38 (NIV)
29 Jeremiah 30:11 (NIV)
30 Jeremiah 30:17-19 (NIV)
31 Jeremiah 31:4-5 (NIV)
32 Jeremiah 31:9 (NIV)
33 Jeremiah 33:9-11 (NIV)
34 Jeremiah 31:31 (NIV)
35 Jeremiah 33:20-22 (NIV)
David will always have a man on the throne of Israel

For this is what the LORD says: “David will never fail to have a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, nor will the priests, who are Levites, ever fail to have a man to stand before me continually to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to present sacrifices.”

This is what the LORD says: “If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed laws of heaven and earth, then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his sons to rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and have compassion on them.”

The composition of the book of Jeremiah is an untraceable complex process

The book of Jeremiah is an anthology of diverse materials relating to the prophet Jeremiah (e.g., poetic oracles, prose narratives, etc.). It seems to be organized primarily in a thematic and literary rather than chronological fashion. Few biblical books have stirred up as much discussion concerning their origin as has Jeremiah. Without doubt the process of composition was a complex one whose stages we probably can never retrace.

The Hebrew and Greek texts of Jeremiah differ significantly

The Hebrew and Greek texts of the book [of Jeremiah] differ significantly. The LXX text is one-seventh shorter than the MT and also has the oracles against the nations in the middle (between 25:13 and 15) rather than at the end (chs. 46-51). Evidence from Qumran suggests that LXX was translated from a short Hebrew original different from that behind MT. Given how greatly LXX and MT diverge, the final book may once have existed in more than one form, or both MT and LXX may ultimately derive from a common Hebrew original. As for the order of the oracles, while most scholars favor the priority of the LXX arrangement, a good case can be made that the MT’s order came first. In sum, the editorial and textual history which gave us the present book (and most OT books!) remains a mystery.

EZEKIEL

During the Exile, Jeremiah was the prophet within Judea, while Ezekiel faced the situation with the exiled community.

Ezekiel and Jeremiah were of a different order of priests

Like the prophet Jeremiah, Ezekiel was a priest. Unlike Jeremiah, Ezekiel was an Aaronid priest. … The book of Ezekiel is written in a style and language remarkably similar to P’s. It is almost as much like P as Jeremiah is like D; there are whole passages in Ezekiel that are nearly word-for-word like passages in P.

Ezekiel declares that, in the future, only certain Levites may be priests. All others are disqualified from the priesthood because of their past transgressions. The only Levites who may function as priests are those who are descendants of Zadok. Zadok was David’s Aaronid priest. And so, according to Ezekiel, only Aaronid priests are legitimate.

Older generations blamed for their situation

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel quote what was probably a current proverb: “The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge” (Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2). It blames the present situation of exile on the older generation, and bespeaks the fatalism of the “children” of the Exile.

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36 Jeremiah 33:17-18 (NIV)
37 Jeremiah 33:25-26 (NIV)
38 OT Survey, pages 339-340
39 OT Survey, pages 340-341
40 Who Wrote?, page 166
41 Who Wrote?, page 166
42 OT Survey, page 364
Ezekiel's covenant promises: Restoration of the nation and of the throne

Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.

And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.” …

Thus the Lord God says: I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms.

They shall never again defile themselves with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. I will save them from all the apostasies into which they have fallen, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. They shall live in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, in which your ancestors lived; they and their children and their children’s children shall live there forever; and my servant David shall be their prince forever.

I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations shall know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forevermore.

ISAIAH CHAPTERS 40 TO 66

The sixth-century setting of Isaiah 40-66

The traditional view that Isaiah wrote the entire book is held today by exceedingly few scholars. Many critics today accept two books (1-39 and 40-66), usually called "First" and "Second" (or "Deutero") Isaiah. … Three major arguments have been given for dividing the prophecy of Isaiah among two or more authors responsible for chs. 1-39 and 40-66: the historical perspective, including the mention of Cyrus, king of Persia from 559-530 B.C. (45:1); the style; and the theological themes.

Many recent works no longer give any reasons for accepting the notion of two or three Isaiahs. The authors state as solid fact that chs. 1-39 were written by "Isaiah of Jerusalem" and 40-66 (or 40-55) by "an unknown prophet of the Exile." It is fair to say, however, that the break between chs. 39 and 40 is much clearer than that between chs. 55 and 56.

There can be no question concerning the development of ideas in the book of Isaiah. A notable difference can be seen between chs. 1-39 and 40-66, as even a perusal of the outline will show.

Second Isaiah is most meaningful to the community of faith today precisely when the sixth-century setting of Isa 40-55 is understood and clarified. As a pastor who has taught the book of Isaiah both ways, I can testify that the message of its original historical context, namely, Second Isaiah from the sixth century B.C.E., is readily understood and appreciated by the congregation.

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43 Ezekiel 37:11-17, 23-28 (NRSV)
44 OT Survey, page 281
45 OT Survey, page 282
46 OT Survey, page 286
47 Biblical Canon, page 470
I Promises to the Exiles

**Deutero-Isaiah’s promises to the Exiles**

For thus says the LORD:

I will extend prosperity to her
   like a river,
and the wealth of the nations
   like an overflowing stream;

and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm,
   and dandled on her knees.
   As a mother comforts her child,
      so I will comfort you;
      you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.
   You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice;
your bodies shall flourish like the grass;

and it shall be known
   that the hand of the LORD
      is with his servants,
and his indignation
   is against his enemies.

For the LORD will come in fire,
   and his chariots like the whirlwind,
      to pay back his anger in fury,
   and his rebuke in flames of fire.
For by fire will the LORD execute judgment,

   and by his sword,
      on all flesh;
   and those slain by the LORD
      shall be many.

For as the new heavens and the new earth,
   which I will make,
      shall remain before me, says the LORD;
   so shall your descendants
   and your name remain.

From new moon to new moon,
   and from sabbath to sabbath,

   all flesh shall come to worship before me,
says the LORD.

And they shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.\(^\text{48}\)

**Monotheistic statements located at the early part of “Deutero-Isaiah”**

Isaiah 40-48 takes aim at outsider, that is non-Israelite, neo-Babylonian polytheism and one of its accompanying characteristics, the production of idols. On the other hand, the context is further rhetorical as it aims at persuading insiders, namely Judeans, … about the nature of God and Israel. **Monotheistic statements** in Isaiah 40-55 are confined to what scholars have identified as the first of the two major sections of the work (Isaiah 40-48, 49-55): 43:10-11; 44:6, 8; 45:5-7, 14, 18, 21; 46:9.\(^\text{49}\)

\(^{48}\) Isaiah 66:12-16, 22-24 (NRSV)

\(^{49}\) Origins, Monotheism, page 180
I Promises to the Exiles

DEUTERONOMIC HISTORY

The Sources
There was evidence that the Five Books of Moses had been composed by combining four different source documents into one continuous history. For working purposes, the four documents were identified by alphabetic symbols. The document that was associated with the divine name Yahweh/Jehovah was called J. The document that was identified as referring to the deity as God (in Hebrew, Elohim) was called E. The third document, by far the largest, included most of the legal sections and concentrated a great deal on matters having to do with priests, and so it was called P. And the source that was found only in the book of Deuteronomy was called D.50

Deuteronomy provides the key
The book of Deuteronomy is often called the keystone of the entire documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch. … In the Graf-Wellhausen theory of the composition of the Pentateuch, the four documentary sources were J, E, D, and P. The D document was the major portion of Deuteronomy (chs. 12-26). … In 1805, W. M. L. de Wette sought to show that Deuteronomy came from a source not found in the first four books of the Pentateuch. He proposed a date in the seventh century, later than J and E. …

A host of scholars once dated “the book of the law,” according to a theory that it was composed just prior to discovery in 621. … Some have pushed the date of Deuteronomy back to the days of Manasseh or Hezekiah or Amos, or even as early as Samuel. Others set the work after the Exile, in the time of Haggai and Zechariah or later. …

As a result of these varied conclusions, the term “Deuteronomist” came to the fore, and scholars began speaking of the “Tetrateuch” (Genesis-Numbers) and “Deuteronomic history” (Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. …

The book as we have it, like many Old Testament works, appears to have undergone a lengthy process of composition. The process entails updating and modification to fit the changing needs of Israel’s life through the centuries.51

Discovery of Deuteronomy
The book that the priest Hilkiah said he found in the Temple in 622 B.C. was Deuteronomy. … De Wette concluded that the book of Deuteronomy was not a long-lost document, but rather was written not long before its “discovery” by Hilkiah …

The first key breakthrough in finding out the identity of the person who produced this account was the recognition of a special relationship between Deuteronomy and the next six books of the Bible: Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings. These six books are known as the Early Prophets.

In 1943, a German biblical scholar, Martin Noth, showed that there was a strong unity between Deuteronomy and these six books of the Early Prophets. The language of Deuteronomy and parts of these other books was too similar for coincidence. Noth showed that this was not a loose collection of writings, but rather a thoughtfully arranged work. It told a continuous story, a flowing account of the history of the people of Israel in their land. It was not by one author. It contained various sections, written by various people (such as the Court History of David, and the stories of Samuel). The finished product, nonetheless, was the work of one person. That person was both a writer and an editor. He (the person was male, as we shall see) selected the stories and other texts that he wanted to use from sources available to him. He arranged the texts, shortening or adding to them. He inserted occasional comments of his own. And he wrote introductory sections which he set near the beginning of the work. Overall, he constructed a history that extended from Moses to the destruction of the kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians. For this man, Deuteronomy was the book. …

50 Who Wrote?, page 24
51 OT Survey, pages 114, 116
Noth’s analysis and the term “Deutonomistic history” came to be widely accepted among investigators. The case was strong. The first book of the Early Prophets, the book of Joshua, begins where Deuteronomy leaves off. It develops themes that are begun in Deuteronomy, and it refers to matters first mentioned in Deuteronomy. Key passages in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings use terminology that comes from Deuteronomy and refer to specific passages in Deuteronomy. … The Deutonomistic history covers the period from Moses to the end of the kingdom.52

The Deutonomists’ History

Although the Deutonomistic History did not reach its final form until after the exile (during the sixth century B.C.E.), substantial parts had certainly been completed by the time of Josiah’s death in 609 B.C.E. This history tells the story of Israel and Judah from the entry to the land of Israel to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 587/6 B.C.E. and the early days of the subsequent exile.53

The Deuteronomic Historian

It is time to name [the Deuteronomic Historian]. In the first place, we know of a man who was alive and writing in precisely those years: the prophet Jeremiah. He was in the right places at the right times. He was a priest, of the priests of Shiloh-Anathoth. He was in Jerusalem during the reign of Josiah, when Dtr1 was produced. He was in Egypt after the destruction and exile, when Dtr2 was produced. His book is filled with the language of the Deutonomistic history, the same favorite terms and phrases, the same metaphors, the same point of view on practically every important point. He was quite possibly the son of the man who unveiled the law code of Deuteronomy. He favored Josiah but not his successors on the throne.

The book of Jeremiah, further, is filled throughout with the language of both Dtr1 and Dtr2. How could phrases that are typical to Dtr1 appear in the book of Jeremiah, regularly intertwined with phrases that are otherwise unique to Dtr2, unless all three came from the same source? …

There are numerous scholarly hypotheses regarding the authorship of the book of Jeremiah. The book is partly the oracles of the prophet, which are mostly in poetry, and partly the stories about the prophet’s life, which are in prose. Some suggest that Jeremiah himself composed the poetry and that the scribe, Baruch son of Neriyah, was the composer of much of the prose. Baruch is mentioned numerous times in the book of Jeremiah. He is described as writing documents for Jeremiah. And it is reported that he went into exile in Egypt with Jeremiah.” If it is true that Baruch wrote much of the prose of the book of Jeremiah, then he would presumably be the author-editor of the Deutonomistic history as well.54

In the case of the Deutonomistic history, the degree of similarity of Dtr1 and Dtr2 is phenomenal. … The first edition of the history, Dtr1, had to be written before Josiah died in 609 B.C. The second edition, Dtr2, had to be written after the Babylonian destruction and exile in 587 B.C. That is only a difference of twenty-two years.55

It may be best to think of the Deutonomistic writings as a collaboration, with Jeremiah, the poet and prophet, as the inspiration, and Baruch, the scribe, as the writer who interpreted history through Jeremiah’s conceptions.56

One thing that Jeremiah does not appear to be is a fraud. And indeed he and Baruch were no frauds, pious or otherwise. The Deutonomistic historian built his history around the Deuteronomic law code, which was an authentically old document, and which he may well have believed to be by Moses himself. He used other documents as well, and he fashioned a continuous history out of them. His own additions to that history gave it structure, continuity, and meaning.57

52 Who Wrote?, pages 101, 102, 103, 104
53 Cambridge Companion, page 111
54 Who Wrote?, pages 146, 147
55 Who Wrote?, page 146
56 Who Wrote?, page 147
57 Who Wrote?, page 149
I Promises to the Exiles

Israel's history was reshaped in Babylon
The literary and historical traditions of the Israelites were reshaped in Babylon. Written accounts of the past were framed in terms of the present, to construct a pattern or history influenced by their captivity and separation from Jerusalem. The scribes and redactors during this period had an enormous influence on the formation of Israelite tradition, since it was they who put their people’s earliest memories into literary form during the Babylonian Exile.58

Subsequent redactions
The historical books also originate from traditions and sources of the monarchic period, and are certainly based on writings such as the ones quoted in those books (The Book of Jashar, Josh 10:13; The Book of the Acts of Solomon, 1 Kgs 11:41; The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel, 1 Kgs 14:19; 2 Kgs 15:26, 31, and The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah, 1 Kgs 14:29; 2 Kgs 24:5). The historical books have been subjected to one or more Deuteronomistic redactions to form another “account on a large scale” which stretches from the death of Moses to the Exile. The book of Jeremiah and to a lesser extent the book of Ezekiel also underwent Deuteronomistic redaction.59

Among the Prophets, the book of Isaiah and the Minor Prophets, as well as Psalms, were composed by the accretion of writings from before and after the Exile, whereas the historical books are distinguished for having been subjected to one or more Deuteronomistic redactions.60

58 Archaeology, Alpert, pages 77-78
59 Canon Debate, page 135
60 Canon Debate, page 136
II. Promises produced post-Exilic action

II. PROMISES PRODUCED POST-EXILIC ACTION

Events
Exiles return.
Jerusalem rebuilt.
New festivals.
5th
4th

People
Ezra. Nehemiah.
Minor prophets.
5th
4th

Writings
Ezra-Nehemiah. Haggai.
Zechariah. Chronicles.
Malachi. Torah.
Several Psalms
5th
4th

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THE FALL OF BABYLON

Figure 4: The Fall of Babylon, John Martin (1831)

Thus says the LORD of hosts:
The broad wall of Babylon
shall be leveled to the ground,
and her high gates
shall be burned with fire.61

“God has numbered the days of your kingdom [Babylon] and brought it to an end; … Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.” … And Darius the Mede received the kingdom.62

Flee from the midst of Babylon,
save your lives, each of you!
Do not perish because of her guilt,
for this is the time of the LORD’s vengeance;
he is repaying her what is due.63

“Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: … Go up to Jerusalem.”64

“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! … Come out of her, my people.”65

61 Jeremiah 51:58, NRSV
62 Daniel 5:26, 28, 31, NRSV
63 Jeremiah 51:6, NRSV
64 Ezra 1:2-3, NRSV
65 Rev. 18:2, 4, NRSV
II. Promises produced post-Exilic action

The 50 years of exile had been an age of mysteries

The Persians conquered the Babylonians. Babylonia, Egypt, and everything in between, including Judah, now were part of a tremendous, powerful Persian empire. The ruler of this empire was Cyrus the Great. In the same year that he took Babylon, Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Judah. By royal decree, Cyrus permitted the exiles to rebuild their homeland and their Temple. The precious implements of the Temple, which the Babylonians had carried away, were returned—with one exception: the ark.66

The fifty years of exile in Babylonia and Egypt are not described. The nation’s most sacred object and its royal family disappear. Prophecy diminishes. And there are more unknowns. The entire period seems to be an age of mysteries. …

For some reason, the biblical sources do not tell what happened to the ark containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments. Archaeology, too, has shed no light on this at all. The disappearance of the ark is the first great mystery of this period, and it remains one of the great mysteries of the Bible. …

The second great mystery of this period is the disappearance of the Davidic dynasty. According to the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah, those who returned from Babylonia were led by two men named Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel. Both of these men were from the royal house of David. … But Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel cease to be mentioned after the fifth chapter of Ezra. There is no report of the disappearance of these men, no explanation of what happened to the royal family. Rather, as with the ark, the monarchy simply ceases to be mentioned. … Also, prophecy diminishes, and perhaps disappears, in this period. The age of the great prophets is past. …

How many of the people who were in Babylonia actually took advantage of the opportunity to return to Judah? Did the majority stay or leave? The Bible’s figures are confusing. … We also do not know who was already in the land of Judah when the new returnees arrived. Had everyone left the land for Babylonia or Egypt? Probably not. But who—and how many stayed?67

Decree by Cyrus

A decree from Cyrus, king of Persia, authorized Jews to return home to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4). Sheshbazzar prince of Judah did so, bringing along the temple vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar (chs. 1-2). Among the returnees were Zerubbabel and Jeshua the priest (2:2) who rebuilt the altar and re-established regular sacrifices (3:1-6). They also began to lay the temple’s foundation and to rebuild its structure (vv. 7-13).68

SOME EXILES RETURN

Returnees led by Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel

According to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Israelite population returned from captivity to Jerusalem led by Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, who became the leaders of the community. Jerusalem was a Persian province or satrapy at this time.69

Social Stratification

Most studies of Persian-period Judah emphasize a sharp division between a class of elites, usually identified as deriving from the exilic population, and a poorer rural population composed of the “people of the land” (normally identified with the population who had remained behind in Judah during the Babylonian exile). …

Many scholars now agree that during much of the period of Persian dominance the elite class was loyal to, and was supported to some extent by, the Persian authorities, whose self-interests would have been served by such a relationship. If this was in fact the case, the Jewish elites would have been in a somewhat ambiguous position in relation to the rest of the Jewish population, who on the one hand

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66 Who Wrote?, page 155
67 Who Wrote?, pages 155, 156, 157
68 OT Survey, page 552
69 Archaeology, Alpert, pages 78-79
II. Promises produced post-Exilic action

had to depend on them for support and protection, but on the other would have viewed them with hostility because of their relative wealth and privilege.

The composition of the elite class was probably similar in some respects to that of the monarchic period, with the major exceptions being that there were no royal family or officials directly connected to the king’s residence. Jewish officials among the elite would have been answerable to Persian rather than local authorities. Another consequence of Persian dominance seems to have been an increase in the authority of priests and of scribes, many of whom also may have been priests.

Classes of elites clearly represented in the postexilic literature include: professional members of the cult, including Aaronic and Levitical priests (Neh. 7:1, 39, 43; 8:1-9), singers (Neh. 7:1, 23, 45), Temple servants (Neh. 3:26, 31; 7:46; 11:19), and gatekeepers (Neh. 7:1, 23, 45); a scribal class (Ezra 8:1, 9); the provincial governor, who would also have had officials serving under him (perhaps “Solomon’s servants” of Neh. 11:57-60); and “men of the guard” (Neh. 4:23; 7:3). Artisans may also have been counted among the elite during this period (Neh. 3:8, 21-22; Ezra 3:7).

During this restoration period, Judah was only a small part of a vast Persian province. Its political and religious fortunes depended on Persian power and policy.

Conflict in the Postexilic Community

It is clear from the biblical texts that there were internal conflicts and tensions within the province of Judah during this period. But scholarly opinion has varied with respect to its nature and extent. A number of studies focus on this issue in relation to tensions that arose between the returning exiles and the “people of the land,” especially during and after the reign of Darius, who appears to have sent exiles to Judah expressly for the purpose of organizing it more effectively for Persian benefit. The tensions may also have been associated with a related conflict between urban and rural populations.

Another level of conflict portrayed in the texts is rivalry between Judah and Samaria. This rivalry is also represented in Genesis through Kings in the schism between Israel and Judah, with Israel represented as the defecting branch of the true “Israel,” whose religion is focused in Jerusalem. The nature and source of the tensions internal to Judah are constructed in a number of different ways.

Little clarity in the record of the Persian period

Many of the social-scientific studies of the Persian period focus on issues relating to the traditions recorded in Ezra-Nehemiah. … Although they purport to contain records relating to this period and earlier, there are a number of problems interpreters face in attempting to reconstruct the history and society of fifth-century Judah using these traditions as sources. One has to do with their propagandistic orientation. Another relates to the uncertainty regarding whether Ezra went to Judah before or after Nehemiah, or whether he was there at all, and which Artaxerxes appointed them. One commentator remarks: “I very much suspect the text of Ezra-Nehemiah to be a highly fictionalized account with little historical worth.” Others nevertheless believe it is possible to reconstruct, at least in broad outline, the events of the period.

Establishing identity, and the boundaries that define self-identity, are clearly significant issues in the Persian-period biblical literature. This is particularly apparent in the passages in Ezra 9-10 and Nehemiah 13, where inter-marriage with “foreign” women is strongly discouraged. But there are a number of problems confronted if we try to sort out what the meaning and significance of these
II. Promises produced post-Exilic action

references are. As Tamara Eskenazi and Eleanore Judd point out, we are missing important information about these charges against mixed marriages: we are not told what constituted “foreignness,” what proportion of the community was guilty of having married these “foreign” women, why men would have married such women, whether women also married “foreign” men, or what, if anything, happened to these marriages. Most importantly, it is not clear who counts as a “foreigner” or who counts as a legitimate member of “Israel.”

If we are to believe the biblical texts, the actual political and religious restoration of Judah, at least in Jerusalem, did not really begin in earnest until the reign of Darius (522-486 B.C.E.), and, as the exiles began to return, the internal stability of the province seems to have been affected by steadily increasing tensions between the native and immigrant populations.

Archaeological material not reliable for the period

It is not possible to rely to any great extent on archaeological material for reconstructing Persian period Judean society. In some respects, however, the archaeological data we do have do seem to be consistent with some elements of the biblical construct. The material evidence points, for example, to a period of transition in the sixth century.

Subsistence farming continued during the Persian period

The large number of rural sites in Judah dating to the Persian period indicate that the basic subsistence strategies—subsistence farming based on a household economy—remained the same as for previous periods.

Persian strategy

The “restoration” of Judah was possibly based on a deliberate Persian strategy to reorganize the empire. This was carried out through resettlement, founding new settlements, restoring or building new temples, and sometimes establishing law codes. The combined effect of these three initiatives in the case of Judah was the creation of a society and a new ethnic identity whose core had come into the land from outside.

The impact of Persian rule on Judean society and religion appears to have been stronger during Darius’s reign. He is believed, for example, to have sponsored the publication of laws throughout the empire and, therefore, possibly to have supported the codification of Jewish law.

There is also enough material evidence to postulate a change in Judah’s status during the course of the fifth and fourth centuries. One type of evidence, perhaps representing a new phase in imperial policy, is a series of fortresses or garrisons whose construction is dated to the mid-fifth century. … This brief period of occupation is interpreted as having been associated with an intensification of Persian military presence in response either to a challenge posed by Greece on the Mediterranean seaboard and trade routes and/or unrest resulting from an Egyptian revolt (ca. 464-454 B.C.E.). If this was the case, the fortresses would then have been abandoned when they were no longer necessary.

Emphases of the Biblical texts from the Persian period

The emphases in the Persian period texts [of the Hebrew Bible] include the importance of reconstructing Jerusalem and establishing a temple center there, instituting religious law and a “covenant” relationship with a single deity, and promoting ethnic consciousness, all features that are clearly related to a process of self-definition (or redefinition).

The literate class of this new society, usually regarded as having been composed of those who had returned from Babylonia, appear, then, to have generated a kind of ideological superstructure in which

75 Reconstructing Society, page 202
76 Reconstructing Society, pages 188-189
77 Reconstructing Society, page 185
78 Reconstructing Society, page 195
79 Reconstructing Society, page 190
80 Reconstructing Society, page 189
81 Reconstructing Society, pages 185-186
they created an identity and heritage that were continuous with the Iron Age II kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Written into this “history” was an “Israel” that promoted their own self-interests and explained their own situation, over against those of others such as the “people of the land,” that is, those who had remained behind, and peoples from other regions such as Samaria.

The biblical texts assert, for example, that there was a wholesale removal of all classes of “significant” people, and that only the poorest “people of the land” remained behind (2 Kings 24:14; 25:12; Jer. 39:10; 52:15), or that during the period of exile, the land was essentially emptied of people (2 Chron. 36:17-21). When the deportees returned, according to this construct, they met with opposition from the “people of the land,” who are regarded as polluting and as having no legitimate claims in the new community (Ezra 4:1-5; 10:1-17). This “myth of the empty land,” it has been suggested, is not supported by the archaeological evidence, and is most likely an ideological construct intended to benefit those who had returned from exile.82

RESURGENCE OF THE PRIESTLY CLASS

Success of the Aaronid priesthood
They completed building the second Temple, and it was dedicated on Passover, 516 B.C. … We know that the High Priest was an Aaronid, not a Mushite. Most important, our sources indicate that the entire Temple priesthood was Aaronid at this time. All other Levites were not recognized as legitimate priests.83

Levites were regarded as secondary clergy, assistants to the Aaronids, who alone exercised the priestly prerogatives. The struggle between the Mushite and Aaronid priests was over. Somehow, the Aaronids had won completely. Their old claim that they alone were the legitimate priests was now the accepted view. The triumph of the Aaronid priesthood in this period was to have tremendous implications for the formation of the Bible.84

Certainly it was during the Second Temple period that the Aaronid priests were in authority. The stature of the priests in society at the time allowed them to establish and interpret the Bible. They were the main authority during this period, as there was no viable monarchy. The division between the Levites and the priests had already been established during the reign of King Hezekiah.85

Religion’s attempt at continuity with the past
Because of their loss of national independence, self-identity among the peoples of postexilic Judah was probably grounded more in religious beliefs and practices than had been the case during the monarchic period. One of the ways in which identity was constructed, at least among the elites, was on the basis of establishing and affirming religious continuity with the “past.” This was accomplished institutionally by rebuilding the Temple and re-establishing its services of prayer and sacrifice, along with the festivals and rituals that had presumably continued to be celebrated to some extent during the exile, both in Babylonia and in Judah itself. It was also supported literarily by creating a coherent body of sacred literature that was composed in part of earlier traditions, which were reinterpreted in light of the present situation, and in part of newer traditions.86

The nature of the deity also seems to have been given new definition, and in the “official” religion of the urban elites the belief in a single, universal deity replaced the local national God of the monarchic period. Some groups, perhaps including the “people of the land,” were presumably excluded from this religion, which was centered in the Jerusalem Temple. The Temple appears to have become a symbol of the superiority of the ruling class and a means by which they could facilitate economic exploitation, both on the part of the local elites and the Persian authorities who supported it. The establishment of the Temple and the priesthood, a system for identifying “insiders” versus “outsiders,” and an ideology

82 Reconstructing Society, pages 182-183
83 Who Wrote?, pages 157-158
84 Who Wrote?, page 158
85 Archaeology, Alpert, page 77
86 Reconstructing Society, page 209
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of holiness to support the insiders, all apparently supported to some extent by the Persian authorities, thus were interrelated with other means of political control. 87

The Priesthood

The priesthood during the Persian period appears to have been involved as much in political and economic concerns as in those associated with religious beliefs and practices. As an official probably appointed by the Persian government, the high priest in particular would have been responsible for encouraging loyalty and obedience to the Persian Empire as one of his official functions. Priests, and probably other Temple functionaries, were also counted among the elite in Jerusalem. 88

The political power and centralization of the priesthood also brought priests into close contact with other political leaders of Judah, such as the governor, with whom they would have both shared and contested power. It is likely that writing was also controlled by the priesthood, giving them even more power. In contrast to the monarchical period, however, because the priests were no longer answerable to a local king, there was probably more separation between government and religion, to the extent that the priesthood was able to establish itself more completely as a distinct system of power and authority. The biblical construct suggests that the high priesthood was hereditary, beginning at least during the Persian period. Socially, this would have meant that they constituted a portion of the local aristocracy. 89

The Temple

The Jerusalem Temple was the center of elite religion in Persian-period Judah. But it also had other roles within the culture—it was a symbol for the “unity” of the populace (a belief that not everyone would have subscribed to), a ground for contesting power, a place from which the province was administered, a locus for the collection and redistribution of taxes, and the seat of the highest concentration of educated persons. It also served as a symbolic legitimation of the relationship between Judah and Persia. In this respect, construction of the Temple was probably influenced as much by motivations relating to Persian policies and goals as it was by the motivations of the local population, although even within the local population there were probably a variety of opinions and responses to it. Some, for example, would have supported the need to maintain a cult that was agreeable to the Persian overlords. Others would have preferred religious independence despite political domination. Yet others may have viewed politics as irrelevant as long as Temple worship was restored. And many were probably ill-served by the Temple, in the sense that it contributed to their exploitation. 90

In the second Temple period, centralization was achieved. There apparently was no competition from any other religious center in Judah. What Hezekiah and Josiah had tried to do was now actually achieved. One God, one Temple. 91

WRITINGS WERE COMPOSED DURING AND AFTER THE EXILE

Like the book of Psalms, the book of Isaiah and the Minor Prophets were all composed by the addition of previously independent books. Some of these originated before the exile, but were later revised; others originated after the exile. …

The book of First Isaiah (Isa 1-39) and from the Minor Prophets the books Hosea, (Joel), Amos, Obadiah and Micah, as well as books 1-2/3 of Psalms, had their roots in the monarchical period. On the other hand, Second and Third Isaiah (Isa 40-55; 56-66), Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and the last third of the Psalter were composed during or after the Exile. 92

87 Reconstructing Society, page 210
88 Reconstructing Society, page 210
89 Reconstructing Society, page 211
90 Reconstructing Society, page 210
91 Who Wrote?, page 160
92 Canon Debate, page 134
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EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

Two phases of attempted restoration

Ezra-Nehemiah presents the events of two distinct periods of Israel’s restoration to the land after the Exile: (1) the return of the exiles and rebuilding of the temple, 538-516 B.C. (Ezra 1-6); (2) the establishment of the community’s religious life (Ezra) and physical surroundings (Nehemiah), 458-ca. 420 (Ezra 7-Neh. 13).93

Ezra arrived with two important documents

Ezra arrived in Jerusalem with two important documents in his hand. One was this “torah of Moses,” and the other was a letter from the Persian emperor, Artaxerxes, giving him authority in Judah. The emperor’s authorization empowered Ezra to teach and to enforce “the law of your God which is in your hand.” The enforcement powers included fines, imprisonment, and the death penalty.

What was this “torah of Moses,” this “law of your God which is in your hand”? References to it in the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah include material from JE, D, and P. It is therefore likely that the book that Ezra brought from Babylon to Judah was the full Torah—the Five Books of Moses—as we know it.94

Ezra is said in the text to have been authorized by the Persian authorities to return to Judah in order to institute religious reforms, and to have introduced a set of strict laws prohibiting intermarriage. He is also said to have presided over a ceremony of covenant renewal, during which he read from the “Book of the Torah of Moses,” which some scholars believe was the Torah that is now the core of the Jewish canon.95

Ezra, who was both a priest and a skilled scribe, led a further group of nearly two thousand Jews in 458 BC from Babylon to their homeland. He was entrusted with considerable treasures and given extraordinary powers according to a letter of Artaxerxes I. In contrast to Nehemiah, Ezra’s caravan proceeded without an armed escort. The journey took four months. When the problem of mixed marriages was brought to his attention, Ezra tore out his own hair and then uttered a prayer confessing the sins of his people. An extraordinary convocation then gathered in the rain to hear Ezra’s rebuf of their failings, which led to a dismissal of the foreign wives.96

Ezra the lawgiver

In the entire Bible, two men are known as lawgivers: Moses and Ezra. Ezra came from Babylon to Judah eighty years after the first group of exiles returned, in 458 B.C. He was a priest and a scribe. The biblical record states explicitly that he was an Aaronid priest. It also indicates that he was no ordinary scribe. His writing skills were associated with one document in particular: “the torah of Moses.”

Ezra’s reading of the law; feast of Booths, fast and covenant (Neh. 7:73b-10:39 [MT 40]). On the first day of the seventh month (8:2), by popular demand Ezra read aloud from the “book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had given Israel” (v. 1). He read from dawn until midday, standing on a wooden pulpit facing the square before the Water Gate (v. 3). At the same time, the Levites also read and explained the law “so that the people understood the reading” (v. 8)97

Ezra, architect of Israel’s new identity

Ezra the priest was the primary architect of Israel’s new identity. He had prepared himself for the task by the rigorous studying and personal practicing of the law of God (Ezra 7:10). That is why the book portrays him as almost a second Moses. … In Ezra’s day, the Torah or law had become the focal point of national identity, so scribe—the expert interpreter of the law—came to designate the community’s primary spiritual leader. … Unlike the pre-exilic practice, Ezra combined the roles of priest and

93 OT Survey, page 552
94 Who Wrote?, page 159
95 Reconstructing Society, page 183
96 EBC, Chronicles-Job, page 350
97 OT Survey, page 554
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scribe. Eventually a professional class of scribes was to emerge and displace the priesthood as the nation’s spiritual leaders. In the New Testament, the scribes were the most influential leaders in religious matters.

Ezra’s imperial commission authorized him to appoint magistrates and judges, to teach the “law of your God,” and to punish those who failed to obey it (Ezra 7:25f.). It gave him an official Persian title, “scribe of the law of the God of heaven” (v. 12)—in modern terms, perhaps “secretary of state for Jewish affairs.” Thus Ezra arrived in Jerusalem with both the power and zeal to reorganize the Jewish community around the law.98

The book of Ezra

The book of Ezra was originally combined with the writing of Nehemiah. As one volume, they first appeared around 440 BCE, approximately 150 years after the decree of Cyrus encouraging the Judeans to return to their homes. The books of Ezra continued to be revised until the 1st century C.E.

… It has been questioned whether Ezra himself wrote the text, or if it was done by the author or authors of Chronicles; alternatively, Ezra may have written both books. Is it possible that it was Ezra who assembled the five sources into the books of Moses (the Pentateuch) as we know them today? According to R. E. Friedman in Who Wrote the Bible? (1989, pp. 218-239), Ezra is the most likely of all the Aaronid priests to have had access to priestly documents such as the Book of Generations, a text focusing on name lists and genealogy. He may have structured the book of Genesis using priestly terminology and added the ending while in exile in Babylon or after the construction of the Second Temple100

Theme of Ezra-Nehemiah

The author/compiler of Ezra-Nehemiah has woven several theological themes amid the seeming tangle of lists of names and personal memoirs. First, the book stresses the continuity of the postexilic religious community under Ezra and Nehemiah with Israel’s ancient past. … A second theme underscores the temple and the Torah as the twin bases of postexilic Israel’s identity. … The temple is a preface to the emergence of Torah in the book. No sooner is the temple finished than Ezra the priest suddenly appears armed with his imperial commission to teach the law (Ezra 7). It is Torah that

98 OT Survey, page 562
99 © http://sweetpublishing.com
100 Archaeology, Alpert, page 77
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guides the postexilic community to divorce its foreign wives (10:3) and to banish certain aliens from Israel (Neh. 13:1ff.). … The law defined postexilic Judah’s understanding of what behavior God required. … Some readers, however, see the law’s centrality in Ezra-Nehemiah as the root of an unattractive exclusivism and fear of foreigners. But fairness demands that one understand Israel’s postexilic faith in its own context. The restored community was a tiny island in a vast, turbulent ocean of pagan peoples. That harsh reality called for the book’s stern measures.\textsuperscript{101}

**Ezra influential in the redaction process**

By the time of Ezra most of the material included in the Bible had already been attributed to the tradition of Moses by the scribes. If Ezra was a primary redactor his main task was to retain as much of the original text as possible without too much contradiction so as not to disillusion the community. At the same time, he had to appease the priests by not diminishing their part in the narrative as he wove the stories together. The redacted texts were diverse and complicated, and yet there seems to be a meaningful organization. If Ezra was not the redactor, then he probably had a large part in the process and he is acknowledged by most scholars as a prime contributor in the redaction of first five books of Moses.\textsuperscript{102}

Ezra is remembered because, more than any other scribe, he seems to have crafted the guidelines that kept the Biblical narrative viable until the present time.\textsuperscript{103}

Persian period Judah is the most likely setting for the final construct of much of the material in the Hebrew Bible, even though many of the independent traditions originated in earlier periods.\textsuperscript{104}

**Nehemiah, visionary and a man of action**

If Ezra re-established Israel spiritually, Nehemiah gave the fragile community physical stability. … With skill and daring, Nehemiah executed his imperial commission to rebuild the city. He surveyed the walls at night to avoid detection by possible opponents and organized a labor force. Under his expert supervision, the project remarkably was finished in only fifty-two days, despite determined opposition. … Nehemiah’s prayers reveal a man of deep piety and strong conviction. With the wall in place, Nehemiah sought to repopulate Jerusalem and to correct social, economic, and religious abuses. Thus, Nehemiah enhanced both the physical security of the capital and the socio-economic stability of the entire religious community.\textsuperscript{105}

According to the biblical text, Nehemiah was sent to Jerusalem by the Persian emperor Artaxerxes to serve as governor there, and to have been responsible for rebuilding the city walls and introducing a number of reforms. These reforms are portrayed as having included strict enforcement of a policy of exclusivism, according to which membership in the community was determined by birth, support of the Temple, an emphasis on purity and strict conformity to the laws of the Torah, and strict prohibition of intermarriage.\textsuperscript{106}

The book of Nehemiah perhaps more than any other book of the OT reflects the vibrant personality of its author. …

1) Nehemiah was a man of responsibility. That he served as the king’s cupbearer can only mean that he had proven himself trustworthy over a long period.

2) Nehemiah was a man of vision. The walls of Jerusalem had been in ruins for 141 years when Nehemiah learned of an abortive attempt to rebuild them. He had a great vision of who God was and what he could do through his servants.

3) Nehemiah was a man of prayer. His first resort was to prayer. He prayed spontaneously, even in the presence of the king.

\textsuperscript{101} OT Survey, pages 563, 564
\textsuperscript{102} Archaeology, Alpert, pages 78-79
\textsuperscript{103} Archaeology, Alpert, page 79
\textsuperscript{104} Reconstructing Society, page 182
\textsuperscript{105} OT Survey, pages 562-563
\textsuperscript{106} Reconstructing Society, page 183
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4) Nehemiah was a man of action and cooperation. He would explain what needed to be done and inspire others to join him. He knew how to organize the rebuilding work.

Nehemiah repaired the walls of Jerusalem
In spite of opposition, the people responded so enthusiastically that they mended the wall in less than two months. He inspired the people with his own example. Nehemiah, a layman, was able to cooperate with his contemporary Ezra, the scribe and priest, in spite of the fact that these two leaders were of entirely different temperaments. In reaction to the problem of mixed marriages, Ezra plucked out his own hair (Ezr 9:3), whereas Nehemiah plucked out the hair of the offenders (Ne 13:25)!

After the reconstruction of the Second Temple in 515 BCE, Jerusalem began to emerge from its destruction of fifty years earlier, to become part or the newly configured Persian province. The return of Nehemiah, a high-ranking official in the court of the Persian king, marked the beginning of new construction for the city. Nehemiah negotiated with the king to allow the rebuilding of the city walls and was given a special document permitting the work to be completed. He involved the entire community in this project and within 30 days the work was finished.

Dedication of the new walls marked the end of the Exile
The day of the dedication of the new walls was marked with joyous ceremony and marked the end of the Babylonian Exile.

CHRONICLES

Two Histories: Kings (part of the “Deuteronomistic History”) and Chronicles
The Bible contains two works that tell the history of the people in their land. The first is the Deuteronomistic history, and the second is the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles. The Deuteronomistic history came from the circle of the priests of Shiloh. The Chronicles history also came from a priestly circle: the Aaronid priests.

The books of Kings and Chronicles may differ in their perspectives, in their evaluations of kings, and occasionally in their facts.

Chronicles: Date
The Chronicler could not have compiled his work much before 400 B.C., especially if he is also responsible for the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Thus removed by more than a century from even the latest events that he records, the author singles out those episodes whose significance he finds of lasting value, particularly with regard to his contemporary circumstances.

The setting of the book(s) of Chronicles is the postexilic community of Judea. Nevertheless, the specific time of the writing of Chronicles remains open to debate. Proposals range from the Persian time frame (400s BC) to the Greek/Hellenistic time frame (300s-200s BC) to the Maccabean/Hasmonean time frame (100s BC). Observations indicate a likely range of 430-340 BC for the writing of Chronicles, with some preference for the earlier side of this range (ca. 430-400 BC).

The construct of “Israel’s” “history” in Chronicles reflects the Persian period context in that it is strongly biased in favor of Judah, Jerusalem, and the people who remained faithful to the Jerusalemite cult as comprising the true “Israel.”

\[107\] EBC, Chronicles-Job, page 369
\[108\] Archaeology, Alpert, page 79
\[109\] Archaeology, Alpert, page 79
\[110\] Who Wrote?, page 211
\[111\] Who Wrote?, page 214
\[112\] OT Survey, page 545
\[113\] EBC, Chronicles-Job, pages 25-26
\[114\] Reconstructing Society, page 184
II. Promises produced post-Exilic action

Chronicles: Style
Chronicles has more in common with the genre of “annal” than it does with the genre of “chronicle.” … A chronicle is typically an abbreviated listing of historical events, while an annal features more sustained summaries of historical events with narrative shaping and an overall ideological purpose. The narrative shaping of annals typically summarizes the deeds of rulers and people against the backdrop of divine blessing (or judgment). In short, the genre of annal, like the text and content of Chronicles, features documentary details (what took place), ideological aspects (the significance of what took place), and literary elements (the shaping and stylistics of the account of what took place). … Chronicles, like the genre of annalistic literature discussed above, reflects the usage (selectivity) and shaping (literary-theological) of a wide range of sources from the administrative realm (e.g., kings and officials, military, taxation, royal assets) and the religious realm.115

Annalistic literature such as Chronicles is not history for history’s sake. Instead, such texts arrange historical information with an overarching political and/or religious agenda … significant to the historical context (social, political, etc.) of the original audience. In the case of Chronicles, a theology of covenantal hope guides the selection, shaping, and structure of the text, with the goal of imparting this perspective to the Chronicler’s readers and hearers. This perspective makes the tone of the Chronicler’s presentation of historical events didactic, almost sermonic, in its literary style and presentation.116

Chronicles: Is not literal history
Continuity and selectivity are twin considerations for a historian. Continuity is necessary because of the interrelatedness of history. Each event bears a definite relationship to others, like a thread in a fabric, and cannot be understood in isolation. Selectivity is mandatory because no one could record everything that happened in any given era. The historian, therefore, singles out and highlights what is significant. Both considerations involve subjectivity: the historian makes decisions on the basis of what seems important, influenced by personal interests, such as economics, sociology, politics, religion, or military encounters.

The Chronicler is not a historian in the strict western sense. To him Israel’s history was pregnant with spiritual and moral lessons, which he brought to birth through a kind of historical midwifery. He is not concerned so much with the bare facts of Israel’s history as with their meaning. If all valid historical writing is interpretative, the Chronicler’s is highly interpretative. Above all, it is paradigmatic history. As a paradigm tells us how to frame the various tenses of a verb, Chronicles tells its readers how and how not to live, by presenting both positive and negative role models.117

The numbers in Chronicles, particularly regarding the size of combating armies, sometimes seem inflated. … These numbers appear to be a deliberate part of the Chronicler’s homiletical presentation, a resort to rhetorical mathematics in order to enhance the glory of the ancient narratives.118

Chronicles: Is theological history
The Chronicler’s survey of events in the history of Judah is articulated through a theological framework centered on covenant.119

The biblical texts with which Chronicles has parallel passages or differing thematic emphases (such as Samuel and Kings) reflect selectivity, shaping, and emphasis in line with their respective authorial intent in a given pericope. Thus, distinctions and differences in parallel texts (such as Kings and Chronicles) may simply reflect different approaches to telling the same story or reflect a different voice (such as thematic emphasis or theological point) drawn from one event.120

115 EBC, Chronicles-Job, pages 32-33
116 EBC, Chronicles-Job, page 35
117 OT Survey, page 543
118 OT Survey, page 544
119 EBC, Chronicles-Job, page 36
120 EBC, Chronicles-Job, page 38
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POST-EXILIC PSALMS

No book of the Bible has a wider scope than the Psalms. Its tradition and literary history spans from the time of the Judges (ca. 1200 BC) to the centuries just prior to Jesus Christ. It stems from a variety of social circles: from the kingdom of northern Israel to that of southern Judah, and from the royal court and the priestly temple to rural clan settings.

Many psalms originated during Israel’s monarchy (ca. 1000 BC to 587 BC).

The Babylonian destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 587 BC should have resulted in the end of Israel’s religion. But the songs that had accompanied temple rituals were rescued as scrolls carried by the deported scribes. In exile they were correlated with the other sacred scrolls, such as Exodus and 1–2 Samuel. During that period, the psalms became Scripture and thus a “book” in their own right. As indicated by the book’s opening psalm, they now belonged to “the law of the Lord,” on which His people should “meditate day and night” (Psa 1:2).

Even during the Babylonian exile (587–538 BC), psalms were composed and sung, either among the exiles or by those who remained in the land. Psalms 74 and 79 lament the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. Psalm 106 confesses the people’s sin and closes with a petition, “gather us from among the nations.”

After the initial return from Babylonian exile under Zerubbabel (538 BC) and the building of the second temple (ca. 515 BC), the “Psalms of Ascents” (Pss 120–134) probably functioned as a prayer book for pilgrims as they “ascended” (Pss 122:4; 24:3; compare Isa 2:3) to the second temple (Pss 124–126 and 129–130 especially reflect a postexilic setting). Generally, most of these postexilic psalms appear in the latter third of the Book of Psalms.

At a time when Judah was a province of the Persian Empire, and there was no Davidic king, why would scribes choose to retain the Royal Psalms? Their preservation was in part motivated by their reinterpretation in light of the prophecies of a new David (Isa 9:5–6; 11:1–5; Mic 4:14–5:4a; Jer 23:5–6; Ezek 34:23–24; Zech 9:9–10). Certain psalms therefore functioned not only as liturgies and literature, but also as prophecies, engendering hope for a new David.121

Many psalms are post-exilic (especially in the last third of the Psalter).122


122 Search Pre-Exilic Israel, page 245
III. UNFULFILLED PROMISES PRODUCED CHANGE

Events
- Jewish revolts.
  - 2nd BCE 1st

People
- Hasmoneans
- Maccabees
- Hasidim
- Zadokites
- Pharisees
- Sadducees
- Essenes
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Writings
- Daniel, Enoch
- Maccabees
- Jubilees, Dead Sea Scrolls, etc.
  - 2nd BCE 1st

Contents
ROOTS OF APOCALYPTICISM

A welcome reappraisal of apocalyptic takes account of the need to see the subject afresh in its historical and sociological dimensions.123

Failure of Ezekiel’s promise of national resurrection

Israel’s return from exile in Babylon did not go well. The people had expected the dawn of the national resurrection predicted by Ezekiel (Ezek. 37:1-14). Instead, they faced a crisis which threatened to still the feeble heartbeat of nationhood.124

Prophecy declined and apocalyptic speculation grew

When prophecy declined in the fifth century BCE, it was still not succeeded by a growth of historiography; only the memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah and the retelling of the age-old stories of the kings of Israel and Judah in the Books of Chronicles belong to the historical genre. It was followed instead by eschatological speculation, by apocalyptic visions of the end of time, with their awe-inspiring beasts and battles, and by announcements of the ultimate triumph of truth and justice in a future Kingdom of God.125

Postexilic writings are proto-apocalyptic

Postexilic or “late” prophecy (e.g., Ezekiel, Zechariah, Trito-Isaiah) tends to portray God’s intervention in the affairs and history of Israel against a backdrop of cosmic upheaval and discontinuity, which gives this “late” prophecy a proto-apocalyptic flavour.126

The proximate roots of Jewish and Christian apocalypticism can be found in the Hebrew prophets, especially in the oracles of judgment and predictions of the day of the Lord. But the imagery of the apocalypses of the Hellenistic age is much more full and vivid than that of the prophets. To a great extent it harks back to the ancient mythologies of the Near East known to us now through the rediscovered Akkadian and Ugaritic literatures, The Hebrew Bible stands in a cultural continuum with these ancient Semitic mythologies, and much mythological lore that is not reflected in the Bible lived on in oral traditions down into the common era. It is possible to trace a direct line of development from the myths of the second millennium B.C.E. to the apocalypses of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.127

Clifford traces the roots of apocalypticism in ancient Near Eastern myth, primarily in the great combat myths represented by the Akkadian Enuma elish and the Ugaritic Baal Cycle. In these myths we find the theme of the battle with the chaos monster, which figures prominently in such apocalyptic writings as the books of Daniel and Revelation. This is not to suggest that apocalypticism can be reduced to the combat myth. Clifford also notes the relevance of a neo-Assyrian vision of the netherworld to the theme of otherworldly journeys and the relevance of Akkadian prophecies to the apocalyptic motif of prophecy after the fact (ex eventu). But the combat myth undeniably provides one major motif of apocalyptic writings and is the aspect of Near Eastern myth that exercised the greatest influence on apocalyptic tradition.128

Apocalypticism’s indebtedness to ancient Near Eastern myths and Hebrew prophecy

Apocalypticism is a worldview that is indebted to ancient Near Eastern myths and to Hebrew prophecy, but which arose in response to the new challenges of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. …

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123 Daniel, Baldwin, page 48
124 OT Survey, page 550
125 Complete Dead Sea Scrolls, page 49
126 History of Apocalypticism, page 170
127 History of Apocalypticism, page x
128 History of Apocalypticism, page x
In the context of Israelite and Jewish tradition, this world view was novel in the Hellenistic period, especially in its expectation of a final judgment.\textsuperscript{129}

**Apocalypticism not the exclusive property of any one sect or movement**

We should not think that apocalyptic ideas were confined to sectarians living apart from the rest of Judaism, on the model of the Qumran community. The book of Daniel was accepted as canonical scripture by all Jews and Christians, 4 Ezra and especially 2 Baruch have much in common with rabbinic theology and give no indication that they were produced in sectarian communities. Apocalypticism, then, was not the exclusive property of any one sect or movement, although it was characteristic of various movements from time to time.\textsuperscript{130}

**Apocalyptic writings do not reflect the viewpoint of established power**

All the apocalypses we have considered here are born out of a sense that the world is out of joint. The visionaries look to another world, either in the heavens or in the eschatological future, because this world is unsatisfactory. This sense of dissatisfaction is not necessarily an invariable aspect of apocalyptic expectations. In principle, it is possible to conceive of an apocalypticism of the powerful. Divine revelation can be used to buttress established authority and one might look for its ultimate confirmation in the eschatological judgment. But in practice none of the Jewish apocalyptic writings of the Second Temple period reflects the viewpoint of established power.\textsuperscript{131}

**First major cluster of Jewish apocalyptic writings are about the time of the Maccabean revolt**

The first major cluster of Jewish apocalyptic writings originated in the period shortly before and during the Maccabean revolt. For another comparable cluster of writings we must wait until the next great crisis in Jewish history, the revolt against Rome in 66-70 which led to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. In the intervening period of more than two centuries we do not find many apocalypses, but we find considerable evidence of the spread of apocalyptic ideas in several areas of Jewish life. …

While [the Dead Sea Scrolls] do not yield many apocalypses in the literary sense, they provide plenty of evidence for apocalyptic eschatology, most strikingly in the *Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*. The sect that produced the major scrolls evidently adapted the apocalyptic tradition for its purpose.\textsuperscript{132}

**Cluster of eschatological prophets**

Mention should be made of the proliferation of eschatological prophets and messianic pretenders in Judea in the first century B.C.E. John the Baptist and Jesus were most probably eschatological prophets, and several other figures are described by Josephus. When Fadus was governor of Tudea (about 45 C.E.) a man named Theudas “persuaded most of the common people to take their possessions and follow him to the Jordan River. He said he was a prophet, and that at his command the river would be divided and allow them an easy crossing” (*Antiquities* 20.97-98). … A decade later, a similar movement was instigated by an Egyptian, who “made himself credible as a prophet and rallied about thirty thousand dupes and took them around through the wilderness to the Mount of Olives. From there he intended to force an entry into Jerusalem, overpower the Roman garrison and become ruler of the citizen body” (*Jewish War* 2.261-62). … Unfortunately, these prophets left no writings, but the authors of the books of *Enoch* and Daniel, in their day, could equally well have been said to be fostering revolutionary changes under the pretense of divine inspiration. We have no apocalyptic books that can be dated either to the period leading up to the revolt or to the revolt itself. Yet it seems likely that eschatological prophecies of the kind reported by Josephus played a part in

\textsuperscript{129} *History of Apocalypticism*, page 85

\textsuperscript{130} *History of Apocalypticism*, page 85

\textsuperscript{131} *History of Apocalypticism*, page 86

\textsuperscript{132} *History of Apocalypticism*, pages 77-78
fomenting the rebellion, just as the apocalypses of Daniel and Enoch had played a part in the turmoil of the Maccabean revolution.  

**Jubilees**

Though *Jubilees* apparently speaks only about early biblical events, it in fact alludes to the Maccabean situation before the death of Judah Maccabee. The apocalyptic review of history in *Jubilees* 23 describes the oppression and apostasy of the Maccabean period (chapters 16-25), the rise of the faithful group to whom *Jubilees* is written (Jubilees 26), and then God’s direct, apocalyptic intervention in history (chapters 27-31). In addition, the battles against the Amorites (*Jubilees* 34) and the Edomites (chapters 37-8) — neither of which the Bible reports — allude to Judah Maccabee’s battles against Nicanor (1 Maccabees 7:39-50) and against the Edomites. *Jubilees* was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, but probably antedates the foundation of the Qumran community and so was written between 160 and 140 B.C.E.

Similarities shared among *Jubilees*, parts of the *Enoch* tradition, parts of Daniel, and documents from Qumran such as the *Genesis Apocryphon* suggest that Second Temple society featured circles of apocalyptically oriented Jews who shared many of the same ideas and ideals.  

**1 and 2 Maccabees record the Antiochene crisis**

The books of 1 and 2 Maccabees record the events of the Antiochene crisis, the Maccabean resistance, and the Hasmonean restoration. According to 1 Macc 1:54, Antiochus IV built an abomination of desolation. He did this in response to a Jewish riot during his second campaign in Egypt. After rushing to Jerusalem, suppressing the riot, and massacring thousands of Jews (2 Macc 5:11-14, 23-26), Antiochus IV forbade the surviving Jews under penalty of death to practice their religion (Dan 9:27, 11:31). He ordered, instead, the erection of multiple altars for sacrificing pigs and other unclean animals, burning unlawful incense, destroying copies of the books of law, and killing circumcised babies and their families (1 Macc 1:43-61). This persecution of the Jews reached its climax with the abomination of desolation on the altar of the Jerusalem temple. According to Josephus, Antiochus IV built “an idol altar on God’s altar . . . and slew swine on it.” Antiochus IV dedicated the Jerusalem temple to Zeus (2 Macc 6:1-7) and broke down the walls that separated sacred space within the temple precinct from common space outside.

1 Maccabees shows that Daniel 9 had Antiochus IV in mind

Regarding the abomination of desolation, Collins says that 1 Maccabees 1:54 “stands as the earliest interpretation of the phrase in Daniel.” Given Daniel’s interest in Antiochus IV, 1 Maccabees’ reading of Dan 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11 with reference to the Antiochene crisis would seem to be not just the earliest interpretation of these verses but also an indication of the original intention of the author of Daniel. 1 Maccabees 1:54 understood Daniel’s abomination of desolation with reference to the Antiochene crisis. It would seem, then, that the writer of 1 Maccabees considered the Maccabean resolution of that crisis the climax of Daniel’s seventy sevens.  

**The Testaments**

During the second century B.C.E. through the first century C.E., when apocalypses were being written, an allied literary genre, the testament, became popular. Testaments, the purported last words of a famous figure to his sons or followers, have survived in the names of the patriarchs, Moses, Job, and others. In a testament the historical figure usually tells something about his life, exhorts his descendants to virtue, and predicts his descendants’ future, often in the form of an apocalypse concerning the last days and the ultimate destiny of Israel. The hortatory sections are similar to the

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133 *History of Apocalypticism*, pages 79-80  
134 *Cambridge Companion*, page 375  
135 *How early Judaism*, page 1066  
136 *How early Judaism*, page 1066
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Wisdom literature. The most extensive collection of second-century B.C.E. testaments is the work known as the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.137

The *Testament of Moses* is a further witness to eschatological ideas around the turn of the era. … There are indications that the text was originally composed in the Maccabean era and updated later, after the death of Herod the Great in 4 B.C.E. The Testament purports to be the parting speech of Moses … [who] concludes his prediction with the coming of the kingdom of God and the exaltation of Israel to the stars.138

1 Enoch

The *Book of Enoch* is a collection of revelatory materials, written from the third century B.C.E. through the first century C.E. (It is sometimes referred to as the *Ethiopic Book of Enoch* because a complete copy survives only in Ethiopian, and because the Ethiopian Church regards it as canonical.) … Several parts of the book are apocalypses or apocalyptic in orientation; they illustrate the mystical, speculative, and cosmic side of Jewish thought. Two such sections, the *Book of Watchers* (*I Enoch* 1-36) and the *Book of Luminaries* (*I Enoch* 72-82), have their origins in third-century B.C.E. Palestine.139

*The Book of the Watchers* and *The Animal Apocalypse* are only two of the texts that have been gathered together in the first book of Enoch. Other apocalyptic writings in the same collection include *The Astronomical Book*, *The Book of Dreams*, and *The Apocalypse of Weeks*, all equally exotic to any reader whose experience of Judaism is based on the Torah and the Talmud.140

*First Book of Enoch* may be the starting point of apocalypticism

The book of Daniel is hardly the only or even the oldest apocalypse of the ancient Jewish world. In fact, the author of Daniel may have been inspired by still older texts, and not only by the prophetic writings that are readily found in the Bible. …

The starting point of the apocalyptic tradition in Judaism may well be found in a strange and unsettling collection of ancient texts called the *First Book of Enoch*, the oldest of which predate the book of Daniel by a half century or so. … Here we find “the kernel in which the essence of apocalypticism is contained,” according to Italian scholar Paolo Sacchi, a specialist in apocalyptic studies, “and from which the whole tradition grows.” …

*The Book of Watchers* goes on to reveal that the fallen angels are, in fact, the minions of the Devil and “the cause of all the evil upon the earth.”

Significantly, the author of *The Book of Watchers* uses the term “watcher” to identify the celestial figures who are elsewhere called angels, a turn of phrase that also appears in the book of Daniel: “I saw in visions of my head upon my bed,” writes Daniel, “and, behold, a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven.”(Dan. 4:13, KJV) Here is yet another point of linkage between Daniel and the other writings in the apocalyptic tradition: nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible is an angel called a “watcher.” And here, too, the author chooses language that is eerie and even scary: the watchers are spies and provocateurs rather than guardians.

The watchers are guilty of more than crimes of passion, or so Enoch discovers. They also reveal “heavenly secrets” to the human race, including “charms and spells” for working feats of magic, “the art of making up the eyes and of beautifying the eyelids” for purposes of seduction, and the craft of fashioning “swords and daggers and shields and breastplates” for use in making war. God sends the archangel Raphael to bind the chief of the defiant angels, a demonic figure here called Azazel, and cast him into a pit in the desert until “the great day of judgment” when “he may be hurled into the fire.”141

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137 Cambridge Companion, page 375
138 History of Apocalypticism, page 78
139 Cambridge Companion, pages 344-345
140 History of the End, page 42
141 History of the End, pages 40, 41
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**Apocalyptic texts were the alchemist’s crucible**

All of these apocalyptic texts were wholly excluded from the Hebrew Bible itself. In fact, they represent the imaginings and yearnings of men and women who placed themselves at the outer fringes of the Jewish community and sometimes, as in the case of the community at Qumran, far beyond it. And yet these texts are the place where some of the most familiar figures in both Judaism and Christianity were first fleshed out, including the divine redeemer known as the Messiah and the divine adversary known as Satan. Indeed, the apocalyptic texts were the alchemist’s crucible in which the raw materials extracted from the Bible were refined and recoined into something shiny and new.\(^{142}\)

**Unfulfilled prophecy appears to be a major defect of apocalyptic works**

If Antiochus IV Epiphanes was the arch-tyrant of the visions, as all the evidence indicates, and if the visions were recorded during the persecution, then the promises of his demise, accompanied by the establishment of an eternal kingdom of righteousness, create an ongoing problem for the reader. Antiochus did die soon, but the kingdom seems not yet to have come, and certainly not the resurrection promised in 12:2. The issue of unfulfilled prophecy appears to be a major defect of this and other apocalyptic works (and not only those books, for Jesus and Paul also claimed that the consummation was near). Can we avoid saying the book of Daniel was wrong in this respect, and if it was wrong, does not that raise a serious question about its value and its inspiration?

One response to that serious question has been to insist that since Daniel is Holy Scripture, it could not be mistaken; so some way must be found to justify projecting the unfulfilled parts into our own future. … There is nothing like accurate, detailed prediction of the future in the prophetic books of the Old Testament, and the unique, amazing details of Dan 11 are best understood as not being prediction after all.\(^{143}\)

**The most influential passage in Jewish apocalyptic literature**

Daniel 7 is arguably the most influential passage in Jewish apocalyptic literature, and it had a profound influence on the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus is identified as the Son of Man. It is also a powerful vision in its own right.

Like some of the passages we have cited from Isaiah 24-27, it draws on the imagery of the Canaanite combat myth, where Baal, rider of the clouds, triumphs over Yamm, the turbulent sea. It is clear that the little horn represents Antiochus Epiphanes, and that the vision predicts his overthrow. But as Daniel sees it, the struggle is not just between Greeks and Jews, It is a reenactment of the primordial struggle where the beasts of chaos rise from the sea in rebellion against the rightful God.

The most striking aspect of the imagery is that there seem, prima facie, to be two divine figures. Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible it is always YHWH, the God of Israel, who rides on the clouds; here he must be identified with the Ancient of Days. This anomaly reflects the Canaanite background of the imagery. In the ancient myth, El is the ancient one while Baal is the rider of the clouds. In the Jewish context, the “one like a son of man” has often been taken as a symbol for Israel. He does indeed represent Israel in some sense, but such an interpretation misses the significance of the imagery. Elsewhere in Daniel, human figures in visions often represent angels (e.g., 10:5, 18; 12:5-6). “Holy Ones” nearly always represent angels both in Daniel and in the contemporary Jewish literature. In the context of Daniel, the one like a son of man is most satisfactorily identified as the archangel Michael, who is introduced as the “prince” of Israel in 10:21 and 12:1. The Holy Ones of the Most High are the angelic host and Israel is the people of the Holy Ones. The vision predicts the exaltation of Israel, the real conflict is between the angelic hosts and the infernal beasts. This reading of Daniel 7 is confirmed by the dialogue between Daniel and the angel Gabriel in chapter 10.\(^{144}\)

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\(^{142}\) History of the End, page 42

\(^{143}\) Daniel, Gowan, page 38

\(^{144}\) History of Apocalypticism, page 74
III. Unfulfilled promises produced change

ASSIMILATION WITH HELLENISTIC WORLD LED TO THE MACCABEAN REVOLT

Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire in 332 BCE and assimilated the Persian holdings into the Hellenistic world. This confrontation between Western civilization and the Middle East was a traumatic event. Hellenism with its new religion and way of life swept away the local traditions. The books of Maccabees I through IV are considered the most reliable historical accounts and are considered by Jews and Protestants to be part of the Biblical apocrypha. The impact of Hellenism on Judaism led to the Maccabean revolt from 164-163 BCE, the Hasmonean kingship, and the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem.145

The Maccabees/Hasmoneans: History & Overview (166 - 129 BCE)

The death of Alexander the Great of Greece in 323 BCE led to the breakup of the Greek empire as three of his generals fought for supremacy and divided the Middle East among themselves. Ptolemy secured control of Egypt and the Land of Israel. Seleucus grabbed Syria and Asia Minor, and Antigonus took Greece.

The Land of Israel was thus sandwiched between two of the rivals and, for the next 125 years, Seleucids and Ptolemies battled for this prize. The former finally won in 198 B.C. when Antiochus III defeated the Egyptians and incorporated Judea into his empire. Initially, he continued to allow the Jews autonomy, but after a stinging defeat at the hands of the Romans he began a program of Hellenization that threatened to force the Jews to abandon their monotheism for the Greeks’ paganism. Antiochus backed down in the face of Jewish opposition to his effort to introduce idols in their temples, but his son, Antiochus IV, who inherited the throne in 176 B.C. resumed his father’s original policy without excepting the Jews. A brief Jewish rebellion only hardened his views and led him to outlaw central tenets of Judaism such as the Sabbath and circumcision, and defile the holy Temple by erecting an altar to the god Zeus, allowing the sacrifice of pigs, and opening the shrine to non-Jews.

The contemporary Maccabean/Hasmonean history

The majority of scholars point to the rise of the Hasmonean dynasty. With the successful revolt of Judas Maccabeus against the Hellenistic onslaughts of Antiochus Epiphanes (c. 171-164 B.C.), the political tide changed in Israel, culminating in Jewish self-rule. The Hasmonean reign had now dawned and would remain in control until the Roman occupation of the land in 63 B.C. Following the Maccabean revolt, a crisis occurred in the Jewish priesthood that seems to have motivated the formation of the Qumran sect. In 152 B.C., Jonathan Maccabeus appropriated to himself the office of the high priest. VanderKam rehearses the events leading up to and including Jonathan’s self-appointment:

For centuries before this time, the leading native official among the Jews had been the high priest who was descended from the line of David’s priest Zadok. That family had lost the high priesthood shortly before the events of the 160’s B.C. and never regained it. Instead, the kings of the Seleucid Empire appointed several high priests for what appear to have been largely political and financial reasons. Josephus, who with the authors of 1-2 Maccabees is one of our few sources of information for the period in question, maintains that there was no high priest in Jerusalem between 159 and 152 B.C. In 152, Jonathan, one of the Maccabean brothers, was appointed high priest by another Seleucid king (Alexander Balas) because he needed Jonathan’s military backing. In this way the Maccabean or Hasmonean high priesthood began. It lasted until 37 B.C., some 115 years in all.

It is a reasonable conjecture that the Qumran community, composed as it was of pro-Zadokite priests (note, for example the title of one of its documents—the Zadokite Fragments), therefore grew suspicious of the early Maccabean movement.146

145 Archaeology, Alpert, page 80
146 Communities, Last Days, page 59
III. Unfulfilled promises produced change

The Jewish Hammer

Though many Jews had been seduced by the virtues of Hellenism, the extreme measures adopted by Antiochus helped unite the people. When a Greek official tried to force a priest named Mattathias to make a sacrifice to a pagan god, the Jew murdered the man. Predictably, Antiochus began reprisals, but in 167 BCE the Jews rose up behind Mattathias and his five sons and fought for their liberation.

The family of Mattathias became known as the Maccabees, from the Hebrew word for “hammer,” because they were said to strike hammer blows against their enemies. Jews refer to the Maccabees, but the family is more commonly known as the Hasmoneans.

Like other rulers before him, Antiochus underestimated the will and strength of his Jewish adversaries and sent a small force to put down the rebellion. When that was annihilated, he led a more powerful army into battle only to be defeated. In 164 BCE, Jerusalem was recaptured by the Maccabees and the Temple purified, an event that gave birth to the holiday of Chanukah.

![Figure 6: Hasmonean Kingdom (as at 142 BCE)](image_url)

Jews Regain Their Independence

It took more than two decades of fighting before the Maccabees forced the Seleucids to retreat from the Land of Israel. By this time Antiochus had died and his successor agreed to the Jews’ demand for independence. In the year 142 BCE, after more than 500 years of subjugation, the Jews were again masters of their own fate.

When Mattathias died, the revolt was led by his son Judas, or Judah Maccabee, as he is often called. By the end of the war, Simon was the only one of the five sons of Mattathias to survive and he ushered in an 80-year period of Jewish independence in Judea, as the Land of Israel was now called. The kingdom regained boundaries not far short of Solomon’s realm and Jewish life flourished.
The Hasmoneans claimed not only the throne of Judah, but also the post of High Priest. This assertion of religious authority conflicted with the tradition of the priests coming from the descendants of Moses’ brother Aaron and the tribe of Levi.

It did not take long for rival factions to develop and threaten the unity of the kingdom. Ultimately, internal divisions and the appearance of yet another imperial power were to put an end to Jewish independence in the Land of Israel for nearly two centuries.\textsuperscript{147}

**The words “Maccabee” and “Hasmonean”**

The word Maccabee probably derives from the Aramaic mqwbh, meaning “hammer”; it was a nickname given to Judah, the son of Mattathias, and the original military leader of the family. The nickname was then given to the books depicting the resistance to Syrian persecution and domination. According to Josephus and other sources, the family was called the Hasmoneans (from the Hebrew Hashmonay), a designation that was either the name of an obscure ancestor or an earlier nickname. The rulers in succeeding generations of this family are known as the Hasmoneans.\textsuperscript{148}

### THE BOOK OF DANIEL

#### The plot of the book of Daniel

The plot of the stories in Daniel may be summarized as follows: The lives of Jews are put into jeopardy because they insist on remaining faithful to the precepts of their religion, but the Jews persevere, and their God saves them, whereupon the king recognizes the superiority of the God of the Jews.\textsuperscript{149}

A major theme runs through all six of the stories in Daniel. Both superior wisdom and the vindication of the faithful one lead to the same conclusion; all must acknowledge that the God whom the Jews serve is “God of gods and Lord of kings” (Dan 2 47)\textsuperscript{150}

#### Daniel is a composite book

The book of Daniel is also a composite book. Chapters 1-6 contain a collection of traditional tales, often legendary in character, about Daniel and his companions in the Babylonian Exile. These tales were written down some time in the third or early second century B.C.E. Chapters 7-12 report the visions of Daniel, interpreted by an angel. Already in antiquity the Neoplatonist Porphyry showed that these visions did not come from the time of the Babylonian Exile. They give an accurate report of history down to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (to about 167 B.C.E.) but not beyond that point. Although Porphyry did not realize it, the account of the death of the king “between the sea and the holy mountain” (11:45) was inaccurate, and so we know that this prophecy was completed before the news of his death reached Jerusalem. (He died in Persia, late in 164 B.C.E.) The visions of Daniel are pseudonymous, just like those of Enoch.\textsuperscript{151}

#### Versions of the Book of Daniel

One of the challenges of the book of Daniel is that the Septuagint (LXX) version of the book diverges from the Masoretic Text (MT) in significant ways, especially, but not only, in chs. 3-6. At the same time, another version known as Theodotion (θ) has become the well-known and better attested Greek version of Daniel. Neither of these phenomena on their own is unique in the Greek Bible. …

What is unique about the Greek translation of Daniel is that somewhere in the history of the Greek Bible the LXX of Daniel was replaced by θ, which is much closer to the MT, as the authoritative Greek version. … The two Greek versions jostled with each other for many years from possibly the early first century BCE until at least the time of Origen, who was aware of both. By then θ was the Greek text of Daniel favoured by Christians. Jewish opinion during the period in question is less

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{147} \url{http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Maccabees.html} (accessed 16 October 2015)
\bibitem{148} Cambridge Companion, page 352
\bibitem{149} Daniel, Gowan, page 28
\bibitem{150} Daniel, Gowan, pages 28-29
\bibitem{151} History of Apocalypticism, page 73
\end{thebibliography}
III. Unfulfilled promises produced change

accessible. … The two versions [LXX and the MT] differ markedly in the way they tell their stories as well as in the concerns that motivate them. … At one point [the evidence] suggests a LXX which is later than the MT while at another the position is reversed. Gradually a picture emerges into focus of differing, if not competing, wisdom circles witnessed to by the two versions of Daniel 2-7 under scrutiny. These divergent outlooks, possibly originating as early as the Persian period, are hinted at by such things as the way the different kings are viewed, how Daniel and his friends are understood, the use made of symbols, and the picture painted of the interaction between heaven and earth.\(^{152}\)

**Less stable and diverse redaction, editing, and transmission of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Daniel**

Within the section of the Prophets, the historical books, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, as well as Daniel in the tradition represented by the Septuagint, exhibit a history of literary redaction, editorial formation, and textual transmission which is less stable and more diverse than that of Isaiah and Minor Prophets; they are hardly used for explicit quotations, but they are the source of many parabiblical rewritings, especially of an apocalyptic or prophetic character.\(^{153}\)

**The Jews place the book of Daniel in the Writings**

In Judaism, with its custom of copying works of Scripture on scrolls, a Daniel scroll would not necessarily have a fixed place with reference to other scrolls, but the church’s copies of the Septuagint were in codex (book) form, and they located Daniel with the prophetic books. Eventually, Judaism located the book in the third section of the canon, however, the Writings, between Esther and Ezra.\(^{154}\)

**The author of Daniel drew from the surrounding cultures**

The author was clearly a learned person who could use for a new purpose theme, and genres drawn not only from wisdom, prophecy, and worship in the Jewish world but also from the cultures in which he lived.\(^{155}\)

**The book of Daniel is Hellenistic**

The book of Daniel, one of the latest books, and probably Hellenistic in date.\(^{156}\)

In asking what the Hebrew Bible would look like if it were really a Hellenistic religious document, we need to recognize that we actually have such literature. First, there is the biblical book of Daniel, almost certainly written in the context of the Hasmonenean wars of the 2nd century, although of course artificially set in the Babylonian-Persian period for literary effect, as was customary in much ancient literature. And it is no coincidence that the last chapter of Daniel clearly presupposes the Greek notion of the “immortality of the soul” totally foreign to ancient Israel, and therefore conspicuously absent in all the rest of the Hebrew Bible. Daniel is what a “Hellenistic Bible” might look like; and it is atypical, indeed unique, in the corpus of the Hebrew Bible.\(^{157}\)

**Daniel reflects the Hellenistic belief in an afterlife**

The first unambiguous evidence for belief in an afterlife among the Jews comes from the last chapter of the Book of Daniel, which was written during the Maccabean revolt: (Daniel 12:1-3 cited). … Two other types of afterlife are commonly referred to in Hellenistic Jewish literature. One, the return to life with God through resurrection of the body, appears in 2 Maccabees and in some narratives within the Gospels. The predominant Jewish view was that the body and spirit were an integral whole, so that afterlife involved not just the survival of the spirit but also the restoration of the physical body. … At the same time, under the influence of Greek thought, some Jewish works, like the Wisdom of Solomon, affirmed the immortality of the soul.\(^{158}\)

\(^{152}\) *Aramaic, Greek Daniel*, pages 15-17

\(^{153}\) *Canon Debate*, page 145

\(^{154}\) *Daniel, Gowan*, page 23

\(^{155}\) *Daniel, Gowan*, page 32

\(^{156}\) *Biblical Writers Know?*, page 217

\(^{157}\) *Biblical Writers Know?*, page 276

\(^{158}\) *Cambridge Companion*, page 365
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**DANIEL COMPOSED IN THE SECOND CENTURY BCE**

**Daniel is a historical book written around 167-165 BCE**

Though 537 is the last date given in the book [of Daniel], it is not the last recorded event, for the ‘prophecies’ cover the fifth, fourth and third centuries and some of the second. Since it is axiomatic that the date of the final form of a historical book cannot be earlier than the last event it includes, those who think that most of chapter 11 is recording history and not prophecy are committed to a date around 167-165 BC in Palestine. Heaton, for example, marks the change from history to prophecy at 11:40, and argues that this gives us the date of the final composition of the book.

Writing in 165/4 BC, he [the author] looked for the imminent destruction of the fourth kingdom, when God would finally take the power and reign. Whereas the writer had been accurate up to 165, from that point on he revealed ignorance of the movements of Antiochus, so betraying the fact that he was writing prophecy and not history. If this is sound reasoning the book of Daniel proves to be the only book of the Bible whose date of writing can be fixed to within a year.¹⁵⁹

**Stories of Daniel and the visions collected during the 2nd century BCE**

The stories of Daniel were finally collected during the first half of the second century BCE in Palestine, and combined with the visions as a direct result of the religious and national crisis centred on Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Whatever circle was responsible for the MT [the Hebrew Masoretic Text] compilation, it was probably not one sympathetic to the Hasmonean or Maccabean approach. The stories were very soon translated into Greek [the LXX, Septuagint] in the light of the vision material. The Aramaic so translated came from the differing tradition earlier mentioned, perhaps also Persian in origin but representing finally a Palestinian outlook. Whether the translation was physically undertaken in Judea or the diaspora, it also reflects a Judean outlook. It is at this stage that the translator’s unfamiliarity with aspects of the original setting of the stories and his interest in the Maccabean struggle reveals itself. This in part explains the constant interplay between translational interpretation and variant Vorlage as reasons for differences. At the same time the variant ordering available in 967 was probably adopted, and the substantial Greek Additions inserted. Whether or not the Additions had a Semitic original has not been resolved. There is no physical manuscript evidence available to suggest it. The argument of those who claim such an original is dependent on the Semitic cast of the language, but does not adequately take account of the interaction between the two languages during the first and second centuries BCE. That a Greek work can successfully be retroverted into Aramaic or Hebrew may prove nothing more than that it has been authored by a Greek speaker immersed in a Semitic mind set and under the influence of Septuagintal Greek.

This analysis is put forward tentatively as the most likely explanation of sparse and conflicting evidence.¹⁶⁰

**Daniel written in response to a religious and political threat in the 2nd century BCE**

With the contents dated in the sixth century it would be natural to look for a sixth-century background as the historical setting of the book, but here the student finds that most commentaries direct otherwise, for almost without exception it is taken for granted that the book was written in response to a religious and political threat upon Judea in the second century BC. The writer, using legendary material well known to his fellow Jews, and adding the visions to bridge the course of history between the exile and his own day, was encouraging opposition to the foreign oppressor and rallying the faithful to the fight. So firmly is this viewpoint maintained that many commentators do not explain the reasons for their statements asserting a second-century date.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Daniel, Baldwin, page 35
¹⁶⁰ Aramaic, Greek Daniel, pages 275-276
¹⁶¹ Daniel, Baldwin, page 18
III. Unfulfilled promises produced change

Daniel’s interest in the Seleucid Kingdom
Daniel 9 sits between two visions that have an interest in the Seleucid Kingdom, especially the reign of Antiochus IV.\(^{162}\)

Enoch and Daniel arise out of crises created by Hellenism and Antiochus Epiphanes
The definition of an apocalypse … has a history and evolved over time. In the early books of Enoch and Daniel, the genre is in an experimental stage. … Further, it is important to recognize at least two distinct types of apocalypses—the otherworldly journey, typified by the Book of the Watchers, and the historically oriented apocalypses, such as the Apocalypse of Weeks or Daniel 7-12. …

One may say, on a fairly high level of abstraction, that [apocalypses] serve to exhort and console their addressees. The books of Enoch and Daniel arise out of a cultural crisis precipitated by Hellenism and aggravated by the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. Regardless of their status within the Jewish community, the authors of these books surely felt relatively deprived, because of the impact of foreign culture and religious persecution.\(^{163}\)

Daniel completed shortly before the death of Antiochus
The Book of Daniel was completed shortly before the rededication of the Temple and the death of Antiochus: the date is suggested by both the narrative’s detailed review of Antiochus’s reign and the incorrect prediction concerning Antiochus’s final battle and place of death (Daniel 11:40-5). Revised dates for the coming of God’s victory and judgment in the penultimate verse (Daniel 12:12) indicate that the author, writing during the turmoil itself, had to adjust the predictions to fit unfolding events.\(^{164}\)

Most scholars assign the final form of Daniel 7-12 to the Antiochene period
Bergsma and Collins observe that most scholars assign the final form of Daniel 7-12 to the Antiochene period. Each of Daniel’s visions (the four metals in chapter 2, the four beasts in chapter 7, the ram and goat in chapter 8, the seventy sevens in chapter 9, and the kings of the north and south in chapter 11) is read with reference to the Antiochene crisis. Such an understanding of the book means that the terminus ad quem of the seventy sevens is 164 B.C.E., the year that Judah Maccabee rededicated the temple. Antiochus IV had desecrated it three and a half years earlier in 167 B.C.E. If these scholars agree on the terminus ad quem of the seventy sevens, they are divided about the terminus a quo.\(^{165}\)

The “Daniel” seems to have lived in the second century BCE
The “Daniel” who recorded the visions seems to have lived in the second century, not the sixth, even though the book in its present form identifies the visionary who speaks in the first person in chapters 7-12 with the hero of chapters 1-6. All the apocalypses follow the same practice, identifying the author as someone from the distant past, except for Revelation, which claims to be by Christ’s servant John (not necessarily the same as the apostle John).\(^{166}\)

By the second century BC it had become a standard practice to ascribe one’s work to a famous figure from the past to Enoch, Abraham, Solomon, Baruch, or Ezra, for example. If the author of this book was not the Daniel of the Exile, then, he was not doing something irregular for that time, but was only following a common practice.\(^{167}\)

Development of the idea that Daniel related to the second century BCE
The seventeenth century also saw developing interest in the two related convictions that underlie the critical study of Daniel characteristic of the modern period: as well as the belief that all the prophecies

\(^{162}\) Antiochene Crisis, page 2
\(^{163}\) History of Apocalypticism, page 77
\(^{164}\) Cambridge Companion, page 371
\(^{165}\) Antiochene Crisis, page 3
\(^{166}\) Daniel, Gowan, pages 29-30
\(^{167}\) Daniel, Gowan, page 22
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relate historically to the Antiochene period, the conclusion that this was the period in which the book was actually written. … The main features of the critical argument for the second-century date of Daniel are then already present in the work of A. Collins (1727): the historical problems, the Greek words, the prophecies relating to the second century, the book’s location among the Writings, the late Aramaic. The systematic working out of such ideas took place in Germany in the nineteenth century. 168

HISTORICAL ACCURACIES AND INACCURACIES OF DANIEL

The Book of Daniel is not meant as literal history

It is sufficient to say here that Daniel’s main purpose is not to record detailed history but to use stories and symbols to demonstrate God’s control of history. … . When Daniel gives its accounts of “Nebuchadnezzar,” “Belshazzar,” and “Darius the Mede,” it intends to reveal the meaning of their destinies with God and the superiority of God’s kingship to theirs. It will not do to read Daniel the same way we read the writing of the history of the Roman Empire. 169

Questions arise. … Why would God give a revelation concerning “what will happen at the end of days” (2:28) to these gentile (thus pagan) rulers rather than to the covenant people? Is it not more reasonable to assume that such revelations were directed to the Jews (Israelites) through this literary means? If the effect of the various events was so great on the kings, why have we found no evidence outside the Bible? In the case of “Darius the Mede,” whose laws could not be altered, why was not his decree (6:26f. [MT 27f.]) carried out by succeeding kings? What kind of history are these stories and the visions they record? 170

Nothing is known historically of a Daniel in Babylon

The first six chapters are stories about Daniel, speaking of him in the third person, and so are anonymous as to authorship. Daniel speaks in the first person in chapters 7-12, and since he dates his visions in the reigns of Belshazzar and Cyrus, the traditional view has been that this sixth-century character was responsible for the whole book. There may well have been a Daniel in exile around whom these legends grew up, although we know nothing more about him. 171

Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar for the first time in 597 BCE

Daniel 1:1-2 says that Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and took away exiles and spoils in Jehoiakim’s third year. However, there is no record elsewhere of such an event, in the Bible or the Babylonian Chronicle (Grayson 1975a, 102), both of which indicate that Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar for the first time in 597 BC. 172

The book thus raises a historical question at the very beginning. Chapters 1-5 and 7-8 are set in the Neo-Babylonian period. They contain some accurate details for that period, but tend to speak in general terms of court life as it might have been found throughout the ancient Near East. One problem with historicity must be dealt with in the commentary on chapter 5. Belshazzar was not the son of Nebuchadnezzar and was never called king in the Babylonian records, but served only as regent for a time. 173

Some of the historical errors in Daniel

Some of the book [of Daniel’s] claims are at odds with historical fact:

- Daniel depicts the Babylonians, Medes, Persians, and Greeks as four consecutive empires (chap. 2); however, some of those states existed concurrently

168 Daniel, Goldingay, page xxxvi
169 OT Survey, page 567
170 OT Survey, page 572
171 Daniel, Gowan, page 21
172 Daniel, Gowan, pages 18
173 Daniel, Gowan, pages 18-19
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- It talks about Nebuchadnezzar’s being exiled from his kingdom (chap. 4); this probably reflects events involving the last king of Babylon, Nabonidus, who took a “leave of absence” from being king and lived in an oasis on the Arabian peninsula.
- It depicts Belshazzar as the last king of Babylon (chap. 5); this is an error.

Someone living in the Babylonian exile would not have made these kinds of mistakes. In other words, Daniel’s purported setting during the Babylonian exile (see chap. 4) is not plausible; the book must be from a later era. In fact, it employs Greek loanwords (e.g., sumfoniah or “bagpipes,” related to the English word “symphony,” appears in 3:5), which establishes that someone wrote it during the Greek period.174

Historical accuracies and inaccuracies date the completion of the book of Daniel

The author [of Daniel] accurately refers to two campaigns Antiochus led against Egypt, but then speaks of a third, after which Antiochus was to die on the coast of Palestine (11:40-45). This did not happen.175

The inaccuracies in the stories set in the Neo-Babylonian period, the great accuracy of the account of the affairs of the Ptolemies and Seleucids up to a point near the end of the life of Antiochus IV, and the mistaken prediction of his death, have led contemporary scholars to a conclusion about the date of the final form of the book.176

The date of Daniel became a matter of great controversy in the nineteenth century. … The sixth-century date continues to have defenders, but … the efforts to explain the apparent historical errors in chapters 1-6, especially those concerning Belshazzar and Darius the Mede have not been found to be adequate, as most scholars evaluate them. …

When the author writes of the distant past, Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods, he is sometimes accurate, sometimes not, depending on the resources available to him. Memory or written record of the recent past, the Hellenistic period, enables him to describe it very accurately.

When he speaks of his own actual future, he usually does so in very general terms (as in 2:44-45; 7:26-27; 8:25b; 9:27b) and when he does get specific (11:40-45), he has no more exact knowledge of the future than any other human being—inspired or not. So Daniel can be dated more closely than any other biblical book, in 165 BC. These discussions have referred to the completion of the book and do not necessarily account for the entire history of its composition.177

The writer lived long after the events, and made mistakes

It could be that the writer lived so long after the events to which he referred that he had only a hazy knowledge of the relevant historical data and so made mistakes. The majority of scholars have assumed that the last is the most likely explanation.178

No place in history for “Darius the Mede”

The city of Babylon was taken over by the Persians in 539, and this leads to another problem in the book of Daniel, which says the city fell to “Darius the Mede.” Chapters 6 and 9 are dated in his reign, but no such figure has been found in any of the texts from the ancient Near East, and indeed there is no place in history for the reign of such a person. Nabonidus was succeeded immediately by Cyrus the Persian, who is the last king to be named in Daniel (1:21 and 10:1).179

174 Jewish Bible, pages 212-213
175 Daniel, Gowan, page 19
176 Daniel, Gowan, page 19
177 Daniel, Gowan, page 20
178 Daniel, Baldwin, page 19
179 Daniel, Gowan, page 19
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Daniel records Alexander, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids

The coming of Alexander the Great into the Middle East is recorded in cryptic terms in 8:5, 21 and 11:3 (333-323 BC). Chapter 11 then tells the history of the rule of Ptolemies (kings of Egypt, called “king of the south”) and Seleucids (kings of Syria and Mesopotamia, called “king of the north”) until the time of the persecution of the Jews by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes.\(^{180}\)

In chapter 11, where symbolism is not used, the Ptolemies and Seleucids, whose names the reader can supply from other sources, are simply called “king of the south” and “king of the north.”\(^{181}\)

Figure 7: The Ptolemaic (“King of the South”) and Seleucid (“King of the North”) Empires

**RELIGIOUS PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL**

The author of Daniel is preoccupied with cultic issues

Koch in his unfinished Daniel commentary … explicitly interprets the deportation of the temple vessels in chap. 1 as a highly significant symbol for the end of the cultic relationship of Israel (i.e., Judah) with Yahweh. … Another example for the awareness of the cultic influence in the book is Lebram’s statement that “the book of Daniel provides an interpretation of political events from a priestly-cultic standpoint.” He also acknowledges that “the author [of Daniel] is preoccupied with cultic issues. Cultic events play a decisive role in Daniel.”

It was Th. Chary who, to my knowledge, for the first time dealt with the issue of cult in the book of Daniel within the larger framework of his dissertation on cult in postexilic prophecy. In a rather detailed fashion he examines the instances of cultic practices and institutions (e.g., the prayer of Daniel towards Jerusalem in chap. 6 or the vessels in chaps. 1 and 5), but also goes beyond the obvious to point out the anti-idolatry struggle and, what he calls, “ritualistic mentality” throughout the book. He also links such messianic elements as the stone in chap. 2 or the Son of Man figure in chap. 7 to the cultic institutions of Israel, as well as recognizes in the prayers of chaps. 3 and 9 direct allusions to cult. Chary reveals remarkable insights into the cultic fabric of Daniel.\(^{182}\)

\(^{180}\) Daniel, Gowan, page 19

\(^{181}\) Daniel, Gowan, page 30

\(^{182}\) Cultic Motif, page 11
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The Israelite cult is a crucial and connecting thread in the fabric of the book [of Daniel]. … The author of the book of Daniel obviously had a cultic concern. 183

There are … cultic elements in chaps. 1-7. Starting out with the temple vessels in chap. 1 and the decision of the three young Hebrews not to “defile” themselves, the book of Daniel contains cultic elements in almost every area of the Israelite cult system, be it the temple in chaps. 1 and 5, the sanctuary on the mountain in the city in chap. 9, the prayer of Daniel towards Jerusalem in chap. 6, the seventy-week prophecy that is revealed to Daniel at the time of the evening offering in chap. 9, the three weeks of mourning before the vision of the man in linen in chap. 10, or the cleansing of the sanctuary in chap. 8. Daniel deals with cultic space, time, objects, persons, and actions. The author uses cultic language to describe these cultic elements and thereby links his book to the priestly traditions. … The sanctuary, the saints, divine messengers, and qualifying God, the city, the mountain, the people, and the covenant as “holy.” The most holy and the prince are anointed, the “continual” is put down, the desolation is a threat to the cult, sacrifices are mentioned and appointed time plays a role in several places in the book. Dan 9:24 contains several terms that are usually linked with cult. 184

The stories prove that God is great

The last of these narrative chapters is about Daniel and the lion. This story parallels that of the three friends and the fiery furnace (chap. 3). … These stories are not really about specific historical individuals. Rather, they “prove” that God is great and will save any pious Jew, especially those persecuted for religious beliefs. Obviously these stories belong in the literary genre of “royal tales.” In addition, they all feature competition between Jew and non-Jew, in which the underdog—who is the Jew—always wins. 185

The point is rather that the God of Israel is in control of history and that this control will eventually be made manifest. 186

Stories illustrate an attitude about living as a Jew

Daniel creates the illusion of history with notes such as “the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar” (2:1) and “Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old” (6:1). Nevertheless, the stories of Daniel are so exaggerated and implausible that we must wonder whether readers in antiquity believed them.

Ultimately, it may not matter whether the editors and copyists of the stories in Daniel believed that they were true. For the stories exist mainly to illustrate an attitude about living as a Jew: be pious, and even if threatened you will ultimately be saved—to enjoy a better fate than your non-Jewish adversaries. …

Did these stories originate in the Diaspora, and thus illustrate that God saves even outside of the land of Israel? Or did they originate in Israel during the persecutions of Antiochus, and thus illustrate reasons for hope during a dark time? The historical-critical method has not answered this question decisively. No matter how we resolve such issues, the message of the stories in Daniel is what is important. 187

The fanciful narratives provide instruction for living in the Diaspora

The Book of Daniel, the Bible’s major Hebrew apocalypse, did not originate as an apocalyptic text. The first six chapters are folktales, set in the sixth century B.C.E. in Babylonian and then Persian exile; these fanciful narratives provide instruction for living in the Diaspora and encourage trust, fortitude, and fidelity to the Law. …

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During the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, when Temple worship was violated and those faithful to Torah were being killed, “the Book of Daniel attained its final form. With the

183 Cultic Motif, page 14
184 Cultic Motif, page 15
185 Jewish Bible, page 217
186 History of Apocalypticism, page 74
187 Jewish Bible, pages 217-218
III. Unfulfilled promises produced change

appended chapters 7-12, the genre of the text shifts to apocalyptic. … Daniel’s God-given “mantic” wisdom (the ability to interpret dreams, visions, and oracles), which played a prominent part in the stories in chapters 1-6, becomes the vehicle for understanding the Maccabean crisis. 188

They endure martyrdom to purify themselves for union with God and his angels

The Book of Daniel embraces suffering and persecution in a way similar to the martyrdom stories in 2 Maccabees and the Testament of Moses. Like Daniel and his companions in exile (Daniel 1:4), the heroes of these volumes are wise in the ways of God and in the interpretation of divine purposes. Because of their knowledge of the heavenly world and their confidence in their final exaltation with God, they endure martyrdom not just to defy the Seleucids and to provide an example for their fellow Jews but also to purify themselves for union with God and his angels: “Many will purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked will do wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand; but those who are wise will understand” (Daniel 12:10). The wise, who give their lives for Judaism because they receive revelation through the apocalyptic visions and thus know how to face persecution, will live in the heavens with the other divine beings who serve God. No earthly restoration is envisioned, in contrast to the Apocalypse of Weeks in 1 Enoch 91:13, where the just acquire houses, and to 2 Maccabees, which rejoices in a restored Temple. 189

DANIEL PROVIDES ESOTERIC EXPLANATIONS

Few prophetic texts are more straightforward than Jeremiah’s seventy-year oracle, which promised seventy years of Babylonian world domination beginning in 605, followed by punishment of the Babylonians and a restoration of Israel. At first glance, this would seem like the last prophecy that one who lived centuries later would “consult” for contemporary insights.

However, an author who was writing between 167 and 164 would have had good reason to study that passage carefully. For Jeremiah had promised an ultimate, permanent restoration of Israel after seventy years; yet people were now—under Antiochus IV—unable to worship in Jerusalem, and under pain of death for observing basic Jewish practices. Thus, either Jeremiah’s prophecy was false, or else what he said must have a hidden meaning—one that only close study could reveal. The author of Daniel chose the latter approach, revealing this esoteric meaning: (Daniel 9:21-22, 24 quoted).

The author here reinterprets the prophecy of Jeremiah as if the word shiv’im in the phrase “seventy years” were tacitly repeated and revocalized: shavu’im shiv’im, “seventy weeks” of years, namely 70 x 7 = 490 years. Thus, the author grants this central prophecy of Jeremiah a 420-year extension! This reading enables Jeremiah’s oracle to remain a true prophecy, and Jeremiah a prophet of truth. Certainly, the reading in Daniel is not what Jeremiah meant. Several factors that would typify later postbiblical interpretation are already visible here, particularly “creative philology,” where words need not have their usual meaning, especially if they are divine words, which are treated as special. 190

The four kingdoms of Daniel

In the context of the book of Daniel, the four kingdoms must be identified as Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. (Daniel introduces the fictitious figure of Darius the Mede to represent the Median empire.) This sequence also points to Persian influence, since the Medes never ruled over Judea. The sequence of four kingdoms followed by a fifth of a different character was well known throughout the Near East in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. 191

Do not set dates today from the book of Daniel

All contemporary scholarship, including some of the most conservative, also understands that it is inappropriate to try to use Daniel to set dates. 192

188 Cambridge Companion, page 370
189 Cambridge Companion, page 371
190 Jewish Bible, pages 214-215
191 History of Apocalypticism, pages 73-74
192 Daniel, Gowan, page 16
III. Unfulfilled promises produced change

THE LAST-DAY COMMUNITY AT QUMRAN

The authors of the DSS formed a sect

Sociologically, the authors of the DSS formed a sectarian movement. N. T. Wright asserts: “If ever there was a sect, this was it: isolated from the rest of Israel geographically and theologically, claiming to be the true heir of all the promises and the scriptures, regarding even devout Jews of other persuasions as dangerous deceivers. They were the sons of Light, so they thought, and all others, not just the pagans, were the sons of darkness. This group is, in fact, one of the clearest examples known to us of what a sect looks like.”

Qumran history ran from 150 BCE to 68 CE

The chronological setting of Qumran history may be reconstructed from archaeological and literary evidence. The excavations of 1951-6 date the beginning, the terminus a quo, of the sectarian establishment to 150-140 BCE and its end, the terminus ad quem, to the middle of the first war against Rome, 68 CE. The literary allusions, particularly the identifiable historical names, confirm this general finding. It goes without saying, however, that the initial phases of the Community’s existence must have preceded by some years or decades the actual establishment of the sect at Qumran.

Two events might have impacted early Qumran history

Two events seem to have impacted early Qumran history before the arrival of the Teacher of Righteousness [after 152 B.C.). The machinations of Antiochus Epiphanes that precipitated the Maccabean revolt (171-164 B.C.) which, in turn, effected the reversal of fortunes of the Zadokite priesthood, were the motivating factors in the formation of the DSS community. … The second event is intimately related to the first, that of the usurping of the Jerusalem priesthood by Jonathan in 152 B.C., which finalized the separation of the two groups.

The Qumran community and the Dead Sea scrolls originated in the middle of the second century B.C.E. during the aftermath of the Maccabean victory. The members of the community had

193 Communities, Last Days, page 55
194 Complete Dead Sea Scrolls, page 58
195 Communities, Last Days, pages 60-61
III. Unfulfilled promises produced change

withdrawn into the desert in order to practice their Torah faithfulness without interference from Hellenised Jews. They considered the high priest in Jerusalem—whether Jonathan Maccabee in particular or a series of high priests in general—a wicked priest who had abandoned true religion for political and cultural expediency.196

Authors of the DSS were anti-Hasmonean

Although it is sometimes said that the DSS give no hint that its authors were indeed anti-Hasmonean, on the contrary, an allusion to that effect seems to be in Temple Scroll 56:1-14.197

![Figure 9: Map showing the location of Qumran](image)

**QUMRAN WRITINGS**

**Scrolls, but no book or codex**

Longer compositions were written on scrolls, on one side of the sheets only, some of them numbered, which were subsequently sewn together. Papyrus documents were often reused, with a different text inscribed on the verso. Short works such as letters were recorded on small pieces of writing material: leather, papyrus, wood or potsherd. By contrast, no book or codex, with pages covered with script on both sides and bound together, has come to light at Qumran, or in any other Judaean Desert site.199

**The Qumran community had no single, stable text**

The Dead Sea Scrolls community considered authoritative a Bible of sorts, yet they did not have a single stable text for its books. That ancient desert community still proceeded to expound their texts—sometimes in versions that are quite different from those found in (what later crystallized as) the Masoretic text.

In fact, in at least one case, they seem to be interpreting two different versions of the same verse. In other words, just because they believed a certain work to be holy and inspired did not imply that it had to exist in a single version.200

196 *How early Judaism*, page 1070
197 *Communities, Last Days*, page 60
199 *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, page 15
200 *Jewish Bible*, page 277
Various editions of several books

The text of Isaiah was known in a rather stable form and the Qumran text of Minor Prophets coincides substantially with that of the MT. On the other hand, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the historical books were transmitted in various editions. 4QJosh⁴, 4QJudg⁴, 4QSam⁴, 4QJer⁴⁰⁴ and the Old Greek of these books and of Kings and Ezekiel (LXX⁶⁷) attest editions which differ from the MT. As for the Psalms, this book shows a remarkable textual homogeneity, all the more surprising since the Qumran manuscripts of the Psalms emphasize the complexity of its editorial history. If the stability of the text of a book indicates its antiquity and its recognition as canonical, the books of the Pentateuch, Isaiah, Minor Prophets, and Psalms comprise an older and recognized nucleus of the biblical canon. …

The number of manuscripts preserved of each biblical book in the Qumran caves and their state of conservation tell us a great deal about how highly they were regarded in the Qumran period. According to C. Perrot, “The scrolls of the Pentateuch, Minor Prophets and Psalms found at Qumran stand out easily from the other scrolls by their height or the carefulness of their script.” The book of Isaiah may be included among these. … The best represented books are those of the Pentateuch, Isaiah, Minor Prophets, and Psalms, together with important sectarian writings as the book of Jubilees (4QJub⁵ and 4QpapJub⁸), Genesis Apocryphon, and Hodayot, well kept in the important cave 1 (1QapGen and 1QH⁶).²⁰¹

Extreme fluidity of the DSS texts

The Qumran finds have also substantially altered our views concerning the text and canon of the Bible. … The Qumran scriptural scrolls, and especially the fragments, are characterized by extreme fluidity: they often differ not just from the customary wording but also, when the same book is attested by several manuscripts, among themselves. In fact, some of the fragments echo what later became the Masoretic text; others resemble the Hebrew underlying the Greek Septuagint; yet others recall the Samaritan Torah or Pentateuch, the only part of the Bible which the Jews of Samaria accepted as Scripture. Some Qumran fragments represent a mixture of these, or something altogether different. It should be noted, however, that none of these variations affects the scriptural message itself. In short, while largely echoing the contents of biblical books, Qumran has opened an entirely new era in the textual history of the Hebrew Scriptures.²⁰²

Assumed link between the DSS and the Masoretic Text contradicted by historical evidence

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, however, exposed the link between the original writings and the MT (Masoretic Text) for what it really was: an assumption that completely contradicts the historical evidence! Not only do the early textual witnesses indicate the pluriformity of the texts and a loose collection of writings deemed to be Scripture in the Judaism of the first century, but the evidence from the NT (New Testament) itself clearly demonstrates dependence in many cases on the Greek Jewish Scriptures. Furthermore, within Judaism and the early church, the recognition and use of Scriptures extends beyond the original composition or translation of the Scriptures and the texts that descended from them. The lowest common denominator for a solution to this dilemma is to acknowledge that the MT is not equivalent to the original text of the Hebrew Scriptures.²⁰³

The Masoretic Text is not the main witness to the Hebrew Bible

The practical result of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is that they are a double-edged sword for the purposes of textual criticism. On the one hand, that a significant percentage of texts are similar to the MT (Masoretic Text) demonstrates the antiquity of the Masoretic tradition. On the other hand, the presence of text forms that agree with other important textual witnesses (like the Greek Jewish Scriptures) undermines any claim for the authority of the MT and underlines the credibility of these other texts as witnesses to the Hebrew Scriptures.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Canon Debate, pages 136, 137
²⁰² Complete Dead Sea Scrolls, page 16
²⁰³ Biblical Canon, pages 237-238
²⁰⁴ Biblical Canon, pages 233-234
III. Unfulfilled promises produced change

The later dominance of the text form in the MT, regardless of its antiquity, should not mislead us when examining the relationship of the texts and what was considered to be Scripture prior to the end of the first century. The consolidation of the proto-MT was a later development. Though it has been common in biblical scholarship to give priority to the MT as the main witness to the Hebrew Bible, this position is no longer historically tenable.205

A variety of sources used during the Second Temple period

The evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls, Samaritan Pentateuch, Greek Jewish Scriptures, and MT (Masoretic Text) reveal that all were used as Scripture during the Second Temple period and that all witness to the Jewish Scriptures, but none may stake a historical claim for being the best witness to the original Jewish Scriptures or the Christian OT (Old Testament).206

![Figure 10: The Great Isaiah Scroll, Qumran](image)

There were collections of scripture but no fixed list (canon)

At the time of Jesus and rabbi Hillel—the origins of Christianity and rabbinic Judaism—there was, and there was not, a “Bible.” This critical period, and the nature of the Bible in that period, have been freshly illuminated by the biblical Dead Sea Scrolls.

There was a Bible in the sense that there were certain sacred books widely recognized by Jews as foundational to their religion and supremely authoritative for religious practice. There was not, however, a Bible in the sense that the leaders of the general Jewish community had specifically considered, debated, and definitively decided the full range of which books were supremely and permanently authoritative and which ones—even the sublime, useful, or beloved—were not.

The collection or collections of the Scriptures varied from group to group and from time to time. … The exact contents of “the Prophets” may not have been the same for all, and the status of other books beyond “the Law and the Prophets” was neither clear nor widely accepted. …

The Dead Sea Scrolls help us see the state of affairs more clearly from an on-the-spot perspective. “The Bible,” or more accurately then, “the Scriptures,” would have been a collection of numerous separate scrolls, each containing usually only one or two books. There is indeed persuasive evidence that certain books were considered “Scripture.” But there is little evidence that people were seriously asking the question yet about the extent or the limits of the collection—the crucial question for a “Bible” or “canon”—which books are in and which books are outside this most sacred collection.207

205 Biblical Canon, page 234
206 Biblical Canon, page 235
207 DSS Bible, page vii
Qumran had no list of sacred titles
The Community’s attitude to the biblical canon, i.e. the list of books considered as Holy Writ, is less easy to define, as no such list of titles has survived.²⁰⁸

The Temple Scroll and the Book of Jubilees were cited as authoritative
Quite possibly a “largely closed” set of texts that comprised the Bible, mostly identical to our current Bible, also existed among a Jewish sect that lived in the Judean Desert, whose surviving library is what we now call the Dead Sea Scrolls. This community may not have had a notion of canon; at least, they had no special term for such a thing. However, in their interpretive literature they did tend to cite particular books. Furthermore, certain books are extant in many copies, indicating that they were especially important to the community.

Of the books that are part of the classical rabbis’ Bible, only the Book of Esther is missing among the Dead Sea Scrolls that we have today; thus, the community probably did not consider that book authoritative. In contrast, other Dead Sea Scroll texts cite the Temple Scroll and the Book of Jubilees as authoritative. Furthermore, the community kept a large number of manuscripts of both works.

Thus our term “canonical” Bible seems anachronistic for this group in the pre-rabbinic period. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that its set of authoritative books largely, but not completely, overlapped what would eventually become biblical for the rabbis.²⁰⁹

![Image of the Manual of Discipline, Qumran](image)

Figure 11: The Manual of Discipline, Qumran

QUMRAN EXPECTATIONS

Qumran considered themselves the restored Israel
The people of the DSS perceived themselves to be the restored Israel because they properly adhered to the Torah.²¹⁰

The Qumran people identify themselves with the shoot of Israel and of Aaron, which anticipates the document’s later treatment of the coming of the two Messiahs and the restoration of Israel. … The historical beginnings of the Qumran community date to the second century B.C.

²⁰⁸ Complete Dead Sea Scrolls, page 16
²⁰⁹ Jewish Bible, page 275
²¹⁰ Communities, Last Days, page 37, 46
III. Unfulfilled promises produced change

- the Babylonian Exile, 587/586 B.C.
- the continued exile in Damascus, 390 years later
- historical beginnings, c. 196-152 B.C.²¹¹

Full restoration still hoped for

George Nickelsburg’s analysis of Second Temple Jewish literature leads him to conclude: “The destruction of Jerusalem and the Exile meant the disruption of life and the breaking up of institutions whose original form was never fully restored. Much of post-biblical Jewish theology and literature was influenced and sometimes governed by a hope for such a restoration: a return of the dispersed; the appearance of a Davidic heir to throw off the shackles of foreign domination and restore Israel’s sovereignty; the gathering of one people around a new and glorified Temple.”²¹²

Figure 12: The Habakkuk Commentary, Qumran

The End of Days was imminent

Equally important to the sectarians was the immediacy of the End of Days. They anticipated that the old order would soon die. The sect lived on the verge of the End of Days, with one foot, as it were, in the present age and one foot in the future. They were convinced that the messianic era would happen in their lifetime. Their move to the desert from the main population centers of Judaea and their establishment of a center at Qumran had marked the dawn of the new order. Their lives were dedicated to preparing for that new age by living as if it had already come. … Such “inaugurated eschatology” (the initiation of the last days) is thoroughgoing in both the DSS and the NT. That is to say, the DSS and the NT view their respective communities as constituting the restored, eschatological Israel.²¹³

They expected Daniel’s visions would be fulfilled in their day

The Qumran community believed that the visions in Daniel, which had patently not been completely fulfilled in the downfall of Antiochus Epiphanes, were about to be fulfilled in their day, and saw themselves as the embodiment of the discerning teachers and the holy ones on high in Daniel. In keeping with their general expository method, they applied prophecies from Daniel to themselves. … Partly on the basis of Dan 9 the Essenes were actually expecting the messiah between 3 B.C. and A.D. 2. Daniel’s portrait of Antiochus as the embodiment of godless wickedness also furnishes them with a portrait of their enemies.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Communities, Last Days, page 45
²¹² Communities, Last Days, page 27
²¹³ Communities, Last Days, page 49
²¹⁴ Daniel, Goldingay, page xxvii
III. Unfulfilled promises produced change

Qumran believed their times were the fulfilment of biblical predictions
The Qumran writers, while meditating on the words of the Old Testament prophets, sought to discover in them allusions to their own past, present and future. Convinced that they were living in the last days, they read the happenings of their times as the fulfilment of biblical predictions.215

Qumran anticipated the restoration of David’s throne
The Qumran sectarians also anticipated the restoration of David’s throne, which would play a role in the salvation of Israel from her enemies (e.g., 4QFlor).216

They considered themselves the true Israel
It is clear from this literature that the sectaries regarded themselves as the true Israel, the repository of the authentic traditions of the religious body from which they had seceded. Accordingly, they organized their movement so that it corresponded faithfully to that of the Jewish people, dividing it into priests and laity (or Aaron and Israel), and the laity grouped after the biblical model into twelve tribes.217

Qumran was the true Israel of the last days, receiving the new covenant
The eschatological (endtime) literature in the DSS reflects the community’s apocalyptic self-understanding. That is to say, the Qumran sect viewed itself to be the true Israel, the righteous remnant with whom God was establishing his new covenant in the last days (see, e.g., 1QS 1:1; CD 4:2). As the faithful of God, the people of the DSS equated their suffering with the severe messianic woes which Judaism expected to test Israel before the advent of the Messiah (CD 1:5-11; 20:13-15; 1QH 3:7-10). The community’s exile into the desert (Qumran) under the eventual leadership of the Teacher of Righteousness was understood to be the final preparation for the arrival of the messianic age.218

Actions taken at Qumran in preparation for the coming messianic age
The DSS harbor the hope for the two Messiahs of Aaron and Israel (CD 20:1; 1QS 9:11-12). At that time the sons of light (the Qumran members) will wage war against the sons of darkness (everybody else) and will prevail, thus ushering in the kingdom of God (1QM) and the New Jerusalem (4QFlor 1:11-12; New Jerusalem texts [5Q554-55]). In anticipation of that day, the Qumran sect observed a messianic meal (1QS 2:11-22), worked at overcoming the evil inclination within them by submitting to the law and the good inclination, and convened to worship God with the angels, which was a proleptic experience of the coming messianic age.219

THE QUMRAN COMMUNITY AND CHRISTIANITY

Similarities of the Qumran community and Christianity
What is the real story behind the story of Israel as depicted in the DSS and the NT? That the two bodies of literature take the narrative of Israel’s sin-exile-restoration as the point of departure for relating their messages is apparently undeniable. Both agree that Israel, though returned to the land, is nevertheless still in exile.

Each offers an apocalyptic answer to Israel’s plight by presenting its founder as an end-time personage who was forming the true people of God, and the method for maintaining such a stance is pesher hermeneutics. But the respective founders/redeemers of these two communities are unlike what “normative” Judaism expected. Likewise the new way of life called for by each stands in contrast to traditional Judaism. Moreover, both the DSS and the NT emphasize the importance of justification by faith as the means for entering the New Covenant, though significantly different perspectives inform their understanding of how that salvation related to the Torah.

215 Complete Dead Sea Scrolls, page 49
216 How early Judaism, page 1071
217 Complete Dead Sea Scrolls, page 26
218 Communities, Last Days, page 48
219 Communities, Last Days, page 48
Finally, both communities looked to the death and exaltations of their founders as the focal points of the Deuteronomic curses and blessings. …

[The] components of cognitive dissonance are applicable to the DSS community, proceeding from the foundational prophecy made about the Teacher of Righteousness, namely, that during his life the restoration of Israel was inaugurated and would be culminated forty years after his death. … It is the dynamic driving the Scrolls, whose writers believed themselves to be the vanguard of eschatological Israel living in the last generation. …

Forty years after its utterance, the world continued basically unchanged. … How did the Essene covenaners rationalize away the failed prophecy? … By promulgating the notion that they were already spared such when they gathered for worship. It was in that setting that they were joined with their beloved teacher and angels before the heavenly throne. There they experienced the Deuteronomic blessings and restoration of Israel in spiritual form until the final holy war would be waged.220

**The Dead Sea Scrolls and the origins of Christianity**

The Dead Sea Scrolls (hereafter DSS) have emerged as a key player in the question of the origins of Christianity. Now that Gnosticism (and Hellenism in general) has finally released its grip on the topic, the way has been paved for the DSS to step into the forefront of the discussion. This is so because both communities—Christian and Essene (most probably the people who wrote the Scrolls)—are rooted in Jewish apocalypticism and therefore share a common legacy of ideas.221

**The DSS, the NT and apocalypticism**

Both the DSS and the NT utilize apocalypticism to tell the story of Israel, which unfolds in the topics of sin, exile and restoration, though each set of documents tells the story from its respective point of view.222

**The DSS and the NT retell Israel’s story from an apocalyptic view**

The fact that the DSS do not mention Jesus or any other NT person and the high probability that no NT book or early Christian text is included among the many scripts from the eleven caves has convinced most DSS experts that the NT and the Scrolls have no direct relationship between them. …

The similarities between the two bodies of literature … stem from the fact that both groups are retelling the story of Israel from an apocalyptic point of view. A few notable exceptions apply to the preceding rule. Some scholars have made claims of direct contact between the DSS and the NT, causing a stir both in academic circles and in public opinion.223

**Qumran and Christianity each believed they were the apocalyptic restored Israel**

In 539 B.C., Cyrus the Persian, the new ruler of the world, permitted the Jews to return to their land. Many thought the long-awaited restoration had arrived, but such a hope was soon dashed. … Foreign nations continued to run roughshod over the land of Israel: Greece, Egypt, Syria and Rome. A strange and foreboding reality therefore set in. Israel, though now returned to the Promised Land, was still in exile. …

The problem of Second Temple Judaism (539 B.C.-A.D. 70), including the DSS and the NT, was how to resolve the dilemma of Israel’s restoration. Various responses to that quandary were formulated and vociferously presented as divinely sanctioned by different groups—Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Essenes and Christians, to name some of the more well-known sects. In providing alternative answers, however, each circle rewrote, indeed subverted, the story of Israel, redefining its symbols (Torah, temple and racial ethnicity), rituals (feasts, sacrificial system) and beliefs (monotheism, election and eschatology).

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220 *Communities, Last Days*, pages 231, 232, 233, 234
221 *Communities, Last Days*, page 18
222 *Communities, Last Days*, page 18
223 *Communities, Last Days*, page 78
III. Unfulfilled promises produced change

This is where the relationship of the DSS to the NT enters into the picture, for these two groups retold the story of Israel from a decidedly apocalyptic perspective, that is, they believed themselves to be restored Israel living in the last days. 224

The similarities [between the DSS and the NT] stem from the fact that both are retelling the same story line, while the dissimilarities proceed from the dynamic [in] that they are redefining the symbols, rituals and beliefs of that story. This approach should deliver us from the danger of parallelomania, the presumption that parallel ideas in two writings necessarily indicate literary dependence between them. 225

The Essenes produced the DSS and that they, like the early Christians, read the story of Israel to suit their own worldview. 226

The Essenes at Qumran employed, like Matthew, an eschatological hermeneutic in portraying themselves as the embodiment of the true Israel prophesied in the OT. 227

DSS and the NT are reconstructions of Israel’s story

In [second temple Judaism] material we find various reconstructions of the story of Israel. This includes both the DSS and the NT, the former because they presented their community as true Jews who anticipated the restoration of the nation; the latter because, with the exception of Luke, its authors were also Jews retelling the story of Israel the way their master did. 228

Essene and Christian use of the Hebrew Scriptures

Both the New Testament and the Community Rule (1QS) cite Isaiah chapters 28 and 40, but for very different purposes. According to Isaiah 28:16, God says: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a foundation a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation.” Isaiah 40:3 signals the end of the exile by a voice crying, “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” The exhortation is for the people to construct a highway in the desert, and on that road to return to Jerusalem.

The Qumran text applies Isaiah 28:16 (paraphrased) and 40:3 to the Council of the Community and also to the community at large. According to 1QS (col. 8), the Council of the Community shall be “… that tried wall, that ‘precious cornerstone,’ whose foundations shall neither rock nor sway in their place” (Isaiah 28:16). …

In contrast, the New Testament looks to Jesus as the rock and the new Exodus. The Gospel of Mark begins with a composite quotation from Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 applied to John the Baptist and Jesus (Mark 1:2-3). … The focus no longer is the return of the exiles, but is John the Baptist himself.

… In Romans 9:33 Paul changes the point of Isaiah 28:16 concerning a secure foundation and cornerstone for Zion by combining it with Psalm 118:22 concerning a stumbling stone. … Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22 are also combined in 1 Peter 2:4-8. There, the stumbling stone is Jesus, and the metaphor explains his rejection by Israel. Psalm 118 is also used in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 12:10; Matthew 21:42; Luke 20:17) and in Acts 4:11; in all cases it is an apologetic explanation for the rejection by most Jews of the proclamation of Jesus’ messianic identity. 229

Real relationship of the DSS and the NT

Turning to the real relationship between the Scrolls and the New Testament, this can be presented under a threefold heading.

(1) We note (a) fundamental similarities of language (both in the Scrolls and in the New Testament the faithful are called ‘sons of light’); (b) ideology (both communities considered themselves as the

224 Communities, Last Days, pages 19-20
225 Communities, Last Days, page 20
226 Communities, Last Days, page 20
227 Communities, Last Days, page 54
228 Cambridge Companion, page 391
true Israel, governed by twelve leaders, and expected the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God); (c) attitude to the Bible (both considered their own history as a fulfilment of the words of the Prophets). However, all correspondences such as these may be due to the Palestinian religious atmosphere of the epoch, without entailing any direct influence.

(2) More specific features, such as monarchic administration (i.e. single leaders, overseers at Qumran, bishops in Christian communities) and the practice of religious communism in the strict discipline of the sect and at least in the early days in the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts ii, 44-5), would suggest a direct causal connection. If so, it is likely that the young and inexperienced church modelled itself on the by then well-tried Essene society.

(3) In the study of the historical Jesus, the charismatic-eschatological aspects of the Scrolls have provided the richest gleanings for comparison. For example, the Prayer of Nabonidus, known since the mid-1950s, and concerned with the story of Nabonidus’ cure by a Jewish exorcist who forgave his sins, provides the most telling parallel to the Gospel account of the healing of a paralytic in Capernaum whose sins Jesus declared forgiven.

The second example is the so-called Resurrection fragment (4Q521). In this poem, the age of the eschatological kingdom is characterized, with the help of Psalm cxivi, 7-8 and Isaiah li, 1, by the liberation of captives, the curing of the blind, the straightening of the bent, the healing of the wounded, the raising of the dead and the proclamation of the good news to the poor. Likewise, in the Gospels, victory over disease and the devil is viewed as the sure sign of the initial manifestation of God’s reign (Luke xi, 20; Matt. xi, 4-5 cited).230

**John the Baptist might have been associated with the Qumran sect**

From the beginning of comparative studies of Qumran and the NT, scholars have been impressed with the similarities between John the Baptist and the DSS. In fact, no other person in the NT is as likely a candidate for being connected with the Qumran community as John the Baptist. We may note four commonly proposed parallels between the two. First, geographically, both lived in the Judean Desert (cf. Lk 1:80; 3:2 with 1QS 8:13). Second, textually, both based their ministries on Isaiah 40:3, “A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD’ (cf. Mt 3:3; Mk 1:3; Lk 3:3-6 with 1QS 8:12-16). Third, both proclaimed their messages with an eschatological fervency (cf. e.g., Lk 3:1-20 with 1QS 3-4). Fourth, both adhered to a type of baptism of repentance for Jews (cf. Lk 3:16 with 1QS 4:20-21). In light of these similarities, it is possible that John the Baptist may have been associated with the Qumran sect at one time; nevertheless, he later separated from the group to pursue his own calling.231

**JEWISH MYSTICISM**

Surviving Jewish mystical texts come mostly from the Talmudic period (the third century C.E. on), but the Angelic Liturgy at Qumran, visionary experiences and heavenly journeys depicted in numerous apocalyptic works, and several passages from the New Testament suggest that a limited but active interest in mystical topics extended back into the Second Temple period and peaked during the first century C.E. … Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, describes what appears to be his own mystical experience.232

**The four most well-known Jewish groups concurrent with Qumran**

The four most well-known Jewish groups existing approximately during the period of our investigation [into the DSS]: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots.233

**Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots**

Josephus, a late A.D. first-century Jew who was a historian for Caesar, describes three main Jewish sects or philosophies active in Israel from the mid-second century B.C. until the destruction of...
III. Unfulfilled promises produced change

Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes. Some would also add a fourth group to the list—the Zealots.

The Pharisees should be excluded as the group which crafted the Scrolls because it is they who are identified as the community’s enemies.

Many factions, coalitions, and interest groups emerged in Jewish society during the Hellenistic period. Competing priestly and aristocratic families as well as popular social movements included the activities of three groups described by Flavius Josephus, the first-century C.E. Jewish historian: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. … There was no single, normative belief system or practice in Second Temple Judaism, or even in the centuries after, against which these groups defined themselves.

The Sadducees left no written records, and the only evident Pharisee from whom literary texts remain is, ironically, Paul of Tarsus, …

According to Josephus, the Pharisees and Sadducees behaved like political interest groups. … It may be that during the period from the end of Herod’s reign until the revolt in 66 C.E., the Pharisees turned their attention away from politics and toward piety. … Several sources do however suggest that the Pharisees observed biblical laws of ritual purity formerly practiced only by priests in the Temple, kept the Sabbath especially holy, and encouraged the tithing of agricultural products by all Jews. …

The Sadducees, about whom little is known, were mainly drawn from the governing class; they had great economic and political power, but only a small following among the people. …

The Pharisees believed in life after death and the Sadducees adhered to the older position that required no belief in resurrection. …

Sadducees were from the governing class — although not all the chief priests and aristocrats were Sadducees — and the Pharisees were subordinate to them. Thus the Pharisees had to seek influence and power actively and propose new interpretations of laws consistent with their program, whereas the Sadducees held onto traditional teachings and customs, which supported their dominant station in society.

Surveying the internal evidence and … the external data leads one to the justifiable conclusion that the Essenes wrote the DSS and inhabited ancient Qumran.

The religious movements cannot be understood independently of the others

Compared with the ultraconservative rigidity of the Essene Rule, rabbinic Judaism reveals itself as progressive and flexible, while the religion preached and practised by Jesus of Nazareth stands out invested with religious individuality and actuality. Also, by comparison to all three, the ideology of the Gentile Church sounds a definitely alien note.

Yet at the same time, the common ground from which they all sprang, and their affinities and borrowings, show themselves more clearly than ever before. It is no exaggeration to state that none of these religious movements can properly be understood independently of the others.

Expulsion practised at Qumran

Beginning with the blackest sins: any transgression, by commission or omission, of ‘one word of the Law of Moses, on any point whatever’ earned outright expulsion. No former companion might from then on associate with the sinner in any way at all (IQS VIII, 21-4).

Expulsion followed, secondly, the pronouncement for any reason whatever of the divine Name: “If any man has uttered the [Most] Venerable Name, even though frivolously, or as a result of shock, or

234 Communities, Last Days, page 69
235 Communities, Last Days, page 69
236 Cambridge Companion, pages 382-384
237 Communities, Last Days, page 77
238 Complete Dead Sea Scrolls, page 25
for any other reason whatever, while reading the Book or blessing, he shall be dismissed and shall return ... no more.” (IQS VI, 27-VII, 2)

Thirdly, a secretary was expelled for slandering the Congregation (IQS VII, 16).

Fourthly, he was sent away for rebelling against the ‘Foundations’ of the Community: “Whoever has murmured against the authority of the Community shall be expelled and shall not return.” (IQS VII, 17)

Lastly, where a man had been a member of the Council for at least ten years and had then defected to ‘walk in the stubbornness of his heart’, not only was he to be expelled, but the same judgement was extended to any of his former colleagues who might take pity on him and share with him their food or money. 239

Recording of history was not strong among those Jews

The absence from the Dead Sea Scrolls of historical texts proper should not surprise us. Neither in the inter-Testamental period, nor in earlier biblical times, was the recording of history as we understand it a strong point among the Jews. Chroniclers are concerned not with factual information about bygone events, but with their religious significance. 240

239 Complete Dead Sea Scrolls, page 30
240 Complete Dead Sea Scrolls, page 49
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IV. Promises extended to the Gentiles

IV. PROMISES EXTENDED TO THE GENTILES

If apocalyptic is at all the mother of Christian theology, Daniel certainly contributed to this mothering.241

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241 Daniel, Goldingay, page xxix
IV. Promises extended to the Gentiles

JESUS (YESHUA)

Although neither Jesus (nor any of his immediate disciples) left anything in writing, the interpretation of his life and death is foundational to the religion of Christianity.

Doug

Daniel influenced Jesus

Jesus’ discourse concerning the End speaks in Danielic fashion of troubling rumors, the final affliction, many stumbling, the need to endure to the end, the deliverance of the elect, the desolating sacrilege, the need to understand, and the coming of the Son of Man in clouds with great power and glory: “the main part of the eschatological discourse is based on a coherent exposition of or meditation on these texts in Daniel [in chaps. 2 and 7-12]” (L. Hartman, Prophecy, 158; see table, 172-74; cf. Gundry, OT in Matthew). Elsewhere, however, Jesus distances himself from apocalyptic esotericism built on passages such as Dan 2:19-23 (Matt 11:25-27; Luke 17:20-21) (Grimm, Jesus).242

The Gospel’s “little apocalypses” were a midrash on Daniel

The so-called Little Apocalypse of the Gospels—the passages in Matthew, Mark, and Luke where Jesus describes how the world will end—has been called “a very early Christian midrash, or expansion, on the Danielic account of last events.”243

Jesus took that promise of restitution to a new level. Instead of it being limited to physical Israel, the promise was to be extended to all nations. Instead of release from a physical exile, he promised release at the spiritual plane.

Doug

Jesus reinterpreted Israel's Scriptures

Jesus assumed, as did most Jews in his time, that Israel’s Scriptures were to be interpreted and appropriated in new ways, because the present was as much in God’s hands as the past. Especially given the changed circumstances in which the land promised to Israel lay under Roman dominance, much Judaic interpretation turned on the issue of how the divine promises to Abraham and the patriarchs were to be realized.

In the tradition of the prophet Jeremiah, many Israelites awaited God’s renewal of the covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-4). A basic question for them became, What is the essence of belonging to God’s people? In postexilic Judaism, answers to that question varied widely. The writings that came to be called the New Covenant (a more accurate rendering than “New Testament”) need to be seen in the context of Jesus’ distinctive attempt, along with those of his followers and successors, to understand, reclaim, and fulfill the covenantal tradition.244

Jesus contradicted many of Qumran’s standards

Some interpreters of the Dead Sea Scrolls have sought to link Jesus with the Essenes, either directly or by supposing that John the Baptist belonged to the sect. Jesus does appear in the Gospels as one who shared with the Dead Sea group an expectation of covenant renewal, and he celebrated that future event in a characteristic meal of bread and wine. He prepared people to participate in “the kingdom of God,” as he called the divinely mandated future in language also shared with the Essenes. But such similarities also linked Jesus to other Jewish communities, and he contradicted many of the Dead Sea

242 Daniel, Goldingay, page xxix
243 History of the End, page 40
244 Cambridge Companion, page 481
group’s standards: he welcomed outcasts, “sinners,” women, and children, and approached “lepers,” people thought to be dead, Gentiles, and the demon-possessed.  

**Jesus threatened the ideologies of the priestly establishment and groups like those at Qumran**

Jesus’ prophetic perspective threatened the ideologies of both the priestly establishment and groups like the Dead Sea community. He even said that “the sons of this world are cleverer than the sons of light in their own generation” (Luke 16:8), a calculated affront to the Essenes, who proudly labeled themselves “sons of light”!  

**Jesus’ call to be open to all nations**

Jesus’ aggressive actions in the Temple are in Mark not a move toward preserving the uniqueness of Israel’s access to God in this holy place, but a call for its being open to all nations, as Isaiah prophesied it would be (11:15-19).  

**Luke emphasised Jesus’ outreach beyond Judaism**

In Luke 10:1 uniquely, however, a whole new stage in the outreach to the wider world is depicted: Jesus sends out seventy people to spread his message about sharing in the life of God’s people. The number seventy represented the number of the nations of the world within ancient Judaism. … At several points Luke emphasizes or introduces the element of Jesus’ outreach beyond Judaism.  

**The Temple was for “all nations”**

Jesus contended — in the manner of many prophets before him, and with their authorization, he said — that God intended the Temple to be a place of prayer “for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7). … The expanded people of God belonged here as far as he was concerned.  

Jesus’ utterances and actions … implied that … access to Israel’s God should be open to non-Jews.  

**Defining the New Community (Matthew 11-13)**

[Matthew 11-13] depicts Jesus engaged in his healing activity, encountering opposition from the Pharisees as he opens his fellowship in a way that will allow the inclusion of Gentiles after the resurrection. His inclusiveness is defended by a quotation from Scripture (Matthew 12:18-21 = Isaiah 42:1-4) and by an appeal to examples of Gentile faith in the time of Jonah and Solomon (Matthew 12:38-42). Drawing on a tradition also in Mark (Mark 3:31-5), Matthew quotes Jesus as redefining membership in the family of God in such a way as to eliminate ethnic or ritual requirements (Matthew 12:46-50).  

**The reconstitution of God’s promise to his covenant people**

Who are the true heirs of God’s promises to his covenant people? These issues become explicit in the interchange reported in Matthew 21:23-7. Its implications for reconstituting God’s people are evident in a series of parables, including the parable of the two sons, where the climax comes in the prediction that tax collectors and harlots will enter the kingdom (21:28-32), and the parable of the vineyard workers, which insists explicitly that the kingdom will be taken from its traditional heirs and given to a new nation, that is; the Church (21:43).
The inclusiveness of the community of faith

The inclusiveness of the community of faith is indicated in other distinctively Lukan material: Jesus’ compassion for the Samaritans, despite their initial rejection of his message (9:51-6), the healing of the man with dropsy or edema (14:1-6), the healing of ten “lepers” (17:11-19), and the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:9-14).\textsuperscript{253}

PAUL

Called by some as the founder of Christianity as we know it, Paul combined his Hellenistic Stoicism with his diasporic Judaism to extend the promise of release to all, including Gentiles, from spiritual exile.

Doug

Paul, the single most important figure in spreading the movement

Paul was the single most important figure in spreading the movement that began with Jesus and came to be known as Christianity (a term Paul himself did not use) to the wider Roman world. His deepest influence was largely literary (and postmortem): no fewer than thirteen documents in the New Testament were written by him or are attributed to him. In the Book of Acts Paul also features as a central figure, although there are crucial differences between what he says or implies in his letters and what is said about him in Acts.\textsuperscript{254}

Paul was not a disciple and he was at odds with the leaders of the primitive church

Of the twenty-seven documents which make up the NT, almost half are letters ascribed to the apostle Paul. However large Paul’s influence may have been in earliest Christianity, his prominence in the NT canon is disproportionately larger. The peculiarity of this fact should not be overlooked. Paul was not a historical disciple of Jesus, and even after he became a Christian apostle he stood in an oblique relationship with the leading figures of the primitive church. Moreover, Paul’s letters were practical expedients of his missionary work: addressed to specific churches, they are narrowly particular in substance and purpose and make no pretense of general interest or timeless relevance.\textsuperscript{255}

Paul was in common with Jews of the Diaspora

Paul’s letters reflect how much he had in common with other Jews of the Diaspora during the first part of the first century C.E., and how much his thought remains faithful to the biblical heritage. Yet in many details his writings also show substantial influence from the Hellenistic culture that permeated the eastern Mediterranean world. Fortunately, Paul includes in his letters some details of his own background in Judaism, as well as of his conversion experience. In Philippians 3:5-6 he describes his heritage in historical and linguistic terms — the people Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, and Aramaic-speaking parents. He also insists on his ancestral fidelity to Jewish practices, as evidenced by his parents’ having circumcised him on the eighth day and by his own commitment to the Torah. The approach to the Law with which he identified was that of the Pharisees in their commitment to maintain the ritual boundaries, transferred from the Temple cult to personal life, that mark off the people of God as pure and obedient.\textsuperscript{256}

Paul was also influenced by Hellenistic thinking

Although Paul’s primary concern is Jesus’ redefining of the covenant people, the Hellenistic influence on him is apparent in both the literary structure of his writing and in several characteristic aspects of his thought. When Paul describes what the Spirit produces in the moral life of the believer (Galatians

\textsuperscript{253} Cambridge Companion, page 615
\textsuperscript{254} Cambridge Companion, page 530
\textsuperscript{255} NT Canon, pages 35-36
\textsuperscript{256} Cambridge Companion, page 531
Promises extended to the Gentiles

5:22-3), he begins with qualities that are based in the biblical tradition: love, joy, and peace. But he then shifts to terms that come out of Stoic ethics: patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. The argument of the Letter to the Romans builds on the assumption that, just as Jews have the Law of Moses given to them by God, so the Gentiles have the law within, what Stoics would call the law of nature, which provides them with norms by which they should live. Paul goes on to show that both Jews and Gentiles disobey the law they have received in a manner consonant with Stoicism. Far from finding any conflict between his convictions as a devout Jew and the insights he has gained from pagan culture, Paul draws on both to make his arguments. Similarly, Paul’s style in his letters shows affinities with Jewish modes of interpretation of Scripture, while at the same time he also utilizes the rhetorical style of his Greco-Roman contemporaries. For example, he poses questions that would be raised by his opponents and then goes on to answer them—a method of argument characteristic of Hellenistic culture.257

Stoicism

Stoicism is the philosophical school of thought that grew out of the work of Zeno of Citium (ca. 333-264 B.C.E.). … His teaching emphasized reason as the pervasive force that sustained the universe. … The divine presence is described as pneuma, which means “spirit.”258

Conscience

In Stoic philosophy, and among the many thinkers (both expert and popular) influenced by Stoicism, conscience featured as the innate human capacity to be aware of the natural law—and especially the moral law—inherent in the universe. Morality was the product of the human will and humanity’s decision to recognize these moral standards and to live by them. Paul, influenced as he was by Stoicism, describes the moral condition of Gentiles, who, though they have the inner possibility of living in accord with natural law (“what the law requires is written on their hearts”), do not obey it and therefore stand condemned on moral grounds (Romans 2:12-16).259

Paul focused his mission towards Gentiles and pagans

Paul’s preaching met with greater interest among the Gentile sympathizers in synagogues and among pagans with no prior connection with Judaism. Paul saw himself as chosen by God to announce the good news to the foreign nations of the world, as ‘a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God’ (Rom. 5:16), or simply ‘a teacher of the Gentiles’, an apostle ‘entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised’ (Gal. 1:16; 2:7; 1 Tim. 2:7).260

Paul excused Gentile Christians from having to observe ceremonial and dietary Jewish laws

Paul’s Gentile Christians were exempted from the ceremonial and dietary regulations of the Mosaic Law. Chief among these was compulsory male circumcision. …

Apart from a few practices set out in the decree of the council of the apostles as particularly abhorrent to Jews and Jewish Christians, such as eating meat deriving from pagan sacrifices, the flesh of animals killed by strangulation, the consumption of blood, and certain prohibited sexual activities (Acts 15:19-21), Paul, following the decree of the apostolic council, excused his Gentile followers from the rest of the cultic obligations imposed by the Torah. Pagan sacrificial meat, part of which was offered for sale in butchers’ shops, raised a special problem among Gentile Christians. Some of them, having embraced the Jewish view that the gods of other nations were nonexistent, could consider themselves free to partake of any food, even of meat offered to ‘idols’. ‘Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience’, was Paul’s instruction to them (1 Cor. 10:25). But others, lacking such clear judgment or believing that the pagan gods were evil, would have been scandalized by fellow Christians eating food originating from ‘the table of

257 Cambridge Companion, page 534
258 Cambridge Companion, page 10
259 Cambridge Companion, page 556
260 Christian Beginnings, pages 87-88
demons’. Hence Paul advised the strong: ‘Take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling-block to the weak’ (1 Cor. 8:1-10; 10:19-21, 26-9; cf. Rom. 14:13-21).261

**Jesus’ and Paul’s expectation of the *Parousia* removed; church hierarchy instituted**

The structure of church hierarchy described in the Pastoral Epistles clearly reflects the changed circumstances of the post-apostolic age. Bishops, presbyters, deacons and deaconesses represented a world view no longer focused on the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God or the return of Christ, but envisaged a long-term normal future in which concern for the Christian community replaced Jesus’ and Paul’s expectation of the *Parousia*. The eschatological age was giving way to a church firmly rooted in time, space and history.262

**PAUL’S JESUS**

**Paul’s Jesus is different to the Gospel’s Jesus**

The difference between the Jesus of the Gospels and the Jesus of Paul is that the former is understood to be a teacher divinely appointed to deliver a message, whereas Paul’s Christ is the very object of this message.

Paul was not concerned with the concrete details of the life and activities of the historical personality called Jesus. He had nothing to say about Nazareth, or Galilee, about the parents of Jesus, the high priests Annas and Caiaphas or even Herod Antipas or Pontius Pilate. Ignoring the historical context, Paul had his eyes fixed only on the three-day period that started with the night of Jesus’ betrayal, without naming the traitor Judas, and finished with his resurrection.263

**The status of Christ in the Pauline religion**

If all the letters of Paul are taken into consideration, that is to say, in addition to the authentic ones (1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, Philippians and Philemon) also those usually ascribed to Paul’s disciples (Ephesians, Colossians, Timothy, Titus and Hebrews), the status of Christ will still not be firmly established. … Paul never envisaged Jesus as fully sharing the nature of the Deity. When compared to God the Father, ‘the Son’ always occupies an inferior position in Pauline thought, although he stands far above ordinary humans. The co-equality of the divine persons is a concept that is still centuries away. The superiori of God over Christ is manifest in Paul’s religious imagery. …

[Jesus’] elevation to divine sonship was posthumous: he was ‘designated Son of God in power ... by his resurrection from the dead’ (Rom. 1:4). In other words, Jesus was granted the status of Son of God in the full sense, not from his birth, let alone from eternity, nor during his lifetime, but by virtue of his rising from the tomb. In plain words, in Paul’s thought expressed in his most influential writings (1 Corinthians, Galatians and Romans), Jesus’ elevation to the dignity of ‘Son of God’ postdated his earthly existence.264

**PAUL’S ESCHATOLOGY**

**Paul’s “gathering” goes back to the OT gathering of the exiles**

The apostle’s language [at 2 Thessalonians 1:12] is similar to that found in Isa. 66:5 LXX. … Paul has echoed Isa. 66 three times in the preceding verses (1:6, 8a, 8b). …

The content of Paul’s appeal in [2 Thessalonians 2:1ff] concerns not only “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” but also “our gathering to him.” … The motif goes back to the widespread OT hope in the gathering together of the scattered exiles to their own land on the day of the Lord (Ps. 106:47 [105:47 LXX]; Isa. 27:13; 43:4-7; 49:12; 56:8; Jer. 29:14; 30:3, 18; 31:8, 23; 33:7; Joel 3:1-2; Zech

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261 Christian Beginnings, page 94
262 Christian Beginnings, page 99
263 Christian Beginnings, page 99
264 Christian Beginnings, pages 106, 107
IV. Promises extended to the Gentiles

2:6; Tob. 14:5; 2 Macc. 1:27; 2:7, 18; Pss. Sol. 17:50; T Ash. 7:6-7; T Naph. 8:3). This hope was taken over by Jesus and his scattered followers to refer to the final gathering of God’s people with the Messiah.265

Paul recalled the OT prophetic literature

The main clause of [1 Thessalonians] 4:16, “because the Lord himself will come down from heaven,” recalls in a very general way the prophetic literature of the OT that envisions “the day of the Lord,” when God will come to judge the wicked and save the righteous (Isa. 2:10-12; 13:6, 9; Ezek. 7:19; 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:11, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:7-8, 14, 18; 2:2-3; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 3:2; 4:5). The circumstances surrounding Christ’s return are indicated by three prepositional phrases, the third of which involves the sound of a musical instrument: “with the trumpet call of God.” The trumpet in the OT, as in the ancient world generally, functioned primarily not as a musical instrument, but rather as a signal, marking in particular the visible appearance of God.266

Fulfillment of the eschatological promises made to Israel

It seems, clear, therefore, that Paul viewed the conversion of Gentiles at Thessalonica as a fulfillment of the eschatological promises made to Israel. The Thessalonian believers were no longer simply “Gentiles who do not know God”; now they were members of the renewed Israel, the covenant people of God.267

Daniel influenced Paul

Daniel influences Paul, too, perhaps partly via the “midrash” that underlies Mark 13. 1 Thess 4-5 reflects Dan 7 and 12; the portrait of “the lawless one” in 2 Thess 2 reflects that of Antiochus in Dan 7:11; 1 Cor 15:23-28 is shaped by Dan 7 (Betz, Jesus, 121-43). Daniel thus facilitates Paul’s formulating his teaching about the End.268

Apocalyptic eschatology means revealed eschatology

Why call this form of eschatology “apocalyptic”? The adjective is derived from the noun “apocalypse,” a near transliteration of the Greek apokalypsis, literally meaning “unveiling”. The use of this term to characterize “apocalyptic” eschatology was inspired primarily by the New Testament book of Revelation (the Apocalypse of John). The opening verse, from which the traditional title derives, reads: “The revelation [apokalypsis, apocalypse] of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place” (Rev. 1:1). Apocalyptic eschatology refers, then, to the kind of eschatology found in the book of Revelation, and this eschatology is a matter of divine revelation: apocalyptic eschatology is revealed eschatology. It needs also to be recognized, however, that the book of Revelation is in many ways distinctive and cannot be taken as the measure of all expressions of an apocalyptic-eschatological worldview. The sheer quantity and richness of Revelation’s symbolism and imagery are really without parallel in contemporary sources, whether Jewish or Christian. Apocalyptic eschatology can be given expression in much less vivid, certainly less lurid, imagery and language, and Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, of course, would not have the Christian elements found in Revelation. Nevertheless, what is called “apocalyptic eschatology,” whether in Jewish or Christian sources, is normally assumed to bear at least a “family resemblance” to the eschatology found in the book of Revelation; the family resemblance is discernible in the dualism of the two world ages, which is a matter of divine revelation.269

“Apocalyptic eschatology” can apply to Paul

In recent years, many scholars of Jewish apocalyptic, though not all, have found it appropriate and useful to distinguish between apocalypses (a literary type or genre), apocalyptic eschatology (a religious perspective not confined to apocalypses), and apocalypticism (a socioreligious movement or community that has recourse to apocalyptic eschatology as a way of dealing with social or political

Commentary NT use, pages 886-887
Commentary NT use, page 880
Commentary NT use, page 879
Daniel, Goldingay, page xxix
History of Apocalypticism, page 170
alienation). Only the second of these (apocalyptic eschatology) can apply to Paul. He wrote no apocalypses and his apocalyptic-eschatological understanding of Christ did not emerge from social or political or any other kind of alienation. Indeed, according to his own testimony, exactly the reverse is true in his case, as in that of the communities he founded: social and political alienation (often leading to persecution) was a consequence of faith in Christ (the Christ whose poursia was eagerly awaited), not its cause.²⁷⁰

**Paul’s imminent cosmic triumph of God**

According to J. C. Becker, despite the christological modifications, the coherent core of Paul’s gospel remained the imminent cosmic triumph of God, which was the central hope of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology.²⁷¹

**Paul: the present era nearly at its end and the return of Christ is imminent**

In Paul’s view, the present era was nearly at its end, and for this reason the concept of the new age inaugurated by the Second Coming of Christ had to be integrated into the all-encompassing fresco he painted for his followers. The Parousia was the ultimate act of the religious drama in Pauline Christianity.

The Christianity taught by Paul, like the religion preached by Jesus, was driven by an overpowering eschatological ardour. Jesus repeatedly asserted that the Kingdom of heaven would be revealed to his generation. Paul was perhaps even more emphatic about the immediacy of the return of Christ and the inauguration of the reign of God. …

Throwing all caution to the winds, he boldly asserted — as a certainty based on Christ’s promise — that he and his flock would participate in the great encounter.²⁷²

**Paul’s philadelphia (brotherly love) was an eschatological blessing**

Paul views the Thessalonians’ practice of philadelphia (“mutual love”) as an eschatological blessing of God’s covenant people. … Though this blessing of divine instruction was originally intended for Israel (but see the reference to “all nations” in Isa. 2:2 and to “many nations” in Mic. 4:2), Paul believes that it extends to the predominantly Gentile believers at Thessalonica.²⁷³

**PAUL’S CREATIVE MYTHOLOGIES**

**Paul turned baptism into a mythical re-enactment**

Paul envisaged baptism as a mythical re-enactment of the mystery of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus by the person undergoing Christian initiation. He gave an unexpected twist to the imagery of an ordinary Jewish purification ritual. In Judaism, immersion into water was intended to wash away the ritual impurity caused by certain bodily functions (sex, menstruation, childbearing) and by dermatological and genital diseases or by contact with a dead body. …

For Paul, the baptismal pool had a deep allegorical meaning. It symbolized the tomb in which the crucified body of Jesus was laid to rest and where it remained until the resurrection on the third day. Baptism for Paul is a myth-drama. …

Paul’s understanding of baptism is closer to the ideas of the Greek, Egyptian, Syrian and Persian mystery cults that flourished in the Roman Empire in the age of Jesus than to the traditional Jewish and Judaeo-Christian purification ritual.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁰ History of Apocalypticism, page 168
²⁷¹ History of Apocalypticism, page 182
²⁷² Christian Beginnings, page 103
²⁷³ Commentary NT use, page 879
²⁷⁴ Christian Beginnings, pages 90-91
IV. Promises extended to the Gentiles

Figure 13: Promises given to the Jews were extended to the Gentiles
**Mythical meaning of the “Lord’s Supper” revealed to Paul by Christ, not from man**

Paul inherited from his predecessors a second great cult practice, the communal meal, referred to as the ‘breaking of the bread’ as well as ‘thanksgiving’ or eucharist in Greek. As in the case of baptism, Paul supplied a new meaning to the community meal and turned it into an imitation and repetition of the ‘Lord’s Supper’. …

Paul implies that the mythical significance of this meal was revealed to him directly by Christ: ‘I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you’ (1 Cor. 11:23). He does not say that it came to him through apostolic tradition as the story of the death, burial and resurrection of the Saviour: ‘I handed over to you what I in turn had received’ (1 Cor. 15:3). If my understanding is correct, the mystical significance of the Last Supper must not be attributed to the Synoptic evangelists composing their accounts between AD 70 and 100, but to Paul writing in the early 50s. It seems that the idea entered the tradition of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew through Luke, Paul’s disciple, whose Last Supper account mirrors that of his teacher. Only Paul and Luke mention Jesus’ command relating to the repetition of the ritual. For Paul the rite comprised a twofold allegory: the participation of the believers in the redemptive acts of the death and resurrection of Christ, and their assimilation into the mystical body of Jesus and the church. … The breaking of the bread or the ‘Lord’s Supper’, as perceived through Paul’s eyes, became the cornerstone of the cultic edifice of Gentile Christianity in his day and has remained so ever since.

None of the letters of Paul include a general code of behaviour for members of his churches. As a rule, he offered them, in the concluding part of several of his letters, a long or short list of moral rules inspired by, and reflecting, the Jewish ethics of the age. …

It is remarkable that neither the Pastoral Epistles nor the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles assign any particular role to the bishops and presbyters in the conduct of the Lord’s Supper. Their duties were exclusively didactic and pastoral. The Eucharist was a communal ceremony and the other principal rite, baptism, also could be administered by anyone.

**Paul was cautious about Charismatic manifestations**

Charismatic religion, which characterized the activity of Jesus and the life of the Palestinian apostolic church (speaking in tongues and healing as well as angelic appearances in the Acts of the Apostles), was common in the Pauline communities, too. … Paul distinguishes nine varieties of spiritual gifts intended for the common good (1 Cor. 12:8-10 cited). … Whereas the miraculous aura of the charismatic events was seen as the manifestation of divine approval in Palestinian Jewish circles, Paul judged some of them, in particular glossolalia or speaking in tongues, potentially counterproductive during the religious services of his Gentile-Christian congregations.

**Paul’s fertile mind created an elaborate doctrinal construct**

The invisible features that underlie Pauline Christianity consist in an elaborate doctrinal construct developed by Paul’s fertile mind on the subject of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Compared to his vision, the theology of the Synoptic Gospels and of the Acts of the Apostles appears primitive, but Paul finds his match in John’s superb mystical portrait of the superhuman Christ.

Deep familiarity with Judaism and at least a superficial acquaintance with classical culture, linked to a powerful spiritual imagination, enabled Paul to re-use the Jewish religious concepts of Messianism and of the merit gained by the self-sacrifice of martyrs, and create out of these elements an impressive doctrinal synthesis in which Christ was depicted as the final Saviour.
Paul’s part in the formation of Christianity

Compared with the charismatic-eschatological religion of Jesus and the charismatic-eschatological messianic doctrine of the early Jewish-Christian church, Pauline Christianity appears as a significant new departure.

It is not surprising therefore that Paul is often presented as the true founder of the religion centred on Jesus, not only by iconoclastic New Testament scholars like Gerd Lüdemann (Paul, The Founder of Christianity, 2002), but even by as authoritative a textbook as The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 3rd rev. edn, 1997, which states that ‘Paul came widely to be regarded as the creator of the whole doctrinal and ecclesiastical system presupposed in his Epistles’ (p. 1048).

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY AND SCRIPTURE

Earliest Christians focused on a person, not on scripture

Christianity did not begin as a scriptural religion. The faith of the earliest Christians was evoked by and focused on a person, Jesus of Nazareth, and he was apprehended not in written texts but in the preaching about him as the crucified and risen Messiah, and in the charismatic life of the Christian community. The immediacy of Christian experience and the fervor of its eschatological hopes made superfluous even the composition of Christian writings, and there is no intimation at all that the early church entertained the idea of Christian scriptures, much less a collection of them. Therefore, the NT as we think of it was utterly remote from the minds of the first generations of Christian believers.

NT writers sought prophecies about Jesus rather than in exegesis

There is little evidence from the NT writers that they were interested in the original contextual message of the OT itself. … The early Christians were far more interested in finding prophecies of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the Jewish Scriptures than in doing exegesis of scriptural texts for the purpose of discovering the meaning of these texts. This suggests that the primary authority of the early church was not so much the message of the OT, but rather the proclaimed words and deeds of Jesus that the OT Scriptures, it was believed, foretold. … The Christians believed that the whole story of God’s plans and purposes for Israel developed in the OT Scriptures had reached its completion in the life and work of Jesus.

NT writers saw continuity with the Hebrew Scriptures but not exact interpretations

The NT writers saw continuity in what they were describing, presenting, or advocating with the ancient Jewish Scriptures. They fully accepted them as the authoritative word of God, but they also took many liberties in citing the OT, sometimes even altering the passages they cited (e.g., Ps 94:11 in 1 Cor 3:19-20; Ps 68:18 in Eph 4:8; and Ps 8:4 6 in Heb 2:6-8). A study of the NT use of the OT clearly shows that the driving force behind the NT writers was not an exact interpretation or exegesis of the OT, but rather the word of and about the risen Lord.

Christians made highly selective use of the OT

Jesus’ teachings likewise do not result from an exegesis of OT texts; rather, Jesus uses the OT to support his claims, not so much to elucidate meanings of the OT texts. Very seldom, Barr notes, do the NT writers interpret whole passages (e.g., Gen 1-3), mainly because the NT writers never set out to interpret the OT itself, but rather the new substance of the gospel.

Christian use of the OT was highly selective and designed especially to clarify or confirm Christian beliefs. According to Shires, the real moving force of the NT, then, is not the OT but rather the experiences of Jesus. (Footnote: Shires observes that Christians made the OT “their own special possession whose meaning relates directly to their situation.”) … The most important function of

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278 Christian Beginnings, page 113
279 NT Canon, page 57
280 Biblical Canon, pages 206-207
281 Biblical Canon, page 207
IV. Promises extended to the Gentiles

those Scriptures for the early church appears to have been their predictive witness to the Christ event (e.g., Luke 24:44; John 5:39; 2 Tim 3:15). 282

The LXX was the Christians’ Bible

From the beginning of the church, the LXX was the Christians’ Bible, and the Jews never formally fixed what went into it. 283

Paul cited the LXX rather than the MT, and he employed creative exegesis

Paul cites passages from the Greek Jewish Scriptures that differ from the [MT]. One is more likely to encounter a statement similar to that of Bauckham that the NT writers “developed their fresh understanding of the christological identity of God through creative exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures.” 284

The outward expression of Christianity changed

The outward expression of Christianity changed, too, and the communities of enthusiasts progressively gave way to hierarchically organized and firmly governed churches. The status of Christ was also changing. From a seemingly unsuccessful prophetic Messiah he was metamorphosed into a triumphant heavenly Son of God, whose day of glory was expected to dawn in the very near future. 285

“Original inspiration only” does not resolve the NT’s use of the Hebrew Scriptures

Given that the [MT] is not equivalent to the original text and that for many books we cannot reconstruct an original text, one could adopt an alternative position. That is, one might say (and perhaps there are those who already do), “I believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures in their original writings, but I really do not know what the original might have said.” In the end, this agnostic position may be comforting to some, but it ultimately fails to address the problem raised by the NT writers’ use of Scripture. 286

THE CHURCH DEPENDED ON ITS JEWISH APOCALYPTIC HERITAGE

The early church preserved a vast number of apocalyptic texts

Like much Jewish literature of the second temple period, the apocalypses owe their survival almost entirely to early Christianity. In most cases, the extant Christianized form of a Jewish apocalypse is the product of a long prior history of transmission, the particulars of which can be quite murky. Since the Christian groups who copied and transmitted the Jewish apocalypses are either unknown or removed from the conventional avenues of research pursued by the student of early Judaism, the function of these documents for the religious communities that preserved them is often a matter of speculation. It is true that the discovery of fragments of Jewish apocalypses at Qumran has partially filled the vacuum. But these fragments are minuscule in comparison with the vast number of apocalyptic texts preserved by the early Church. And the relationship of these compositions to the sectarian writings of Qumran is still unclear. Theorizing about the social setting and function of the Jewish apocalypses must at some point acknowledge the fact that the context in which these apocalypses survive is a Christian one. 287

282 Biblical Canon, pages 208, 209
283 Biblical Canon, page 206
284 Biblical Canon, page 236
285 Christian Beginnings, page 114
286 Biblical Canon, page 238
287 Apocalyptic Heritage, page 1
IV. Promises extended to the Gentiles

Primitive Christianity took root in Jewish apocalyptic literature

Because there is broad consensus that primitive Christianity took root on the same soil that produced the Jewish apocalyptic literature, specimens like the ‘synoptic apocalypse’ and the Book of Revelation are generally understood as products of the same movement.288

The early Church’s self-understanding as an interim eschatological community and the actual persecutions that it experienced further hastened the absorption of Jewish apocalyptic ideas about the eschatological woes preceding the end-times. Motifs from Jewish apocalyptic associated with war and famine, the ruin of families, the increase of tribulation, the Antichrist and the great apostasy thus found ready acceptance within the apocalyptic thinking of early Christianity.289

The debt of Christianity to its Jewish heritage, particularly its apocalyptic heritage

Early Christians found themselves in a paradoxical relationship with Jews and Judaism. On the one hand, they saw the Jewish people, especially the religious leaders, as their staunchest opponents. Though [the Jews] embraced the Torah and the Prophets, which the Christians believed spoke eloquently of Jesus the Messiah, they had rejected him and now opposed his followers. On the other hand, most of the very first Christians were themselves Jewish and almost all members of the church recognized in Judaism their deepest spiritual roots. As time passed, the percentage of Jewish Christians became negligible, but even when the Church had become almost entirely non-Jewish in membership the Jewish contribution to the new faith could hardly be denied.

One major component of that rich Jewish heritage was the broad, diverse apocalyptic tradition. There can be no doubt that many early Christian writers found Jewish apocalyptic texts, modes of thought, characters, and themes to be particularly valuable as they elaborated their theologies, cosmologies, and philosophies of history.

The New Testament itself gives eloquent witness to the heavy influence from Jewish apocalypticism. Several passages in it qualify as apocalypses (e.g., the Synoptic apocalypses), and apocalypse as the name of a literary genre comes from the Greek title of the Revelation of John. But the legacy of the Jewish apocalypses by no means ended with the New Testament period; it continued in varied ways for centuries and has left a permanent imprint on Christian theology.290

Jesus and the Gospel writers read Daniel typologically

Neither Jesus nor the Gospel writers thought that the verses in Daniel about the abomination of desolation (Dan 9:27, 11:31, 12:11) directly predicted the Roman razing of the Jerusalem temple. They knew that the writer of Daniel was talking about the Antiochene crisis. Nevertheless, they read Daniel typologically and saw in their day a repetition of the pattern of unbelief and worldliness that the writer of Daniel had applied to Hellenistic Jews during the reign of Antiochus IV. In other words, they expected a replay of the Antiochene crisis. Desolation of God’s temple would occur again at the hands of a Gentile army—this time, Rome. The Seleucids and Romans represented historically independent but typologically related administrations of divine judgment. It is this typology that Jesus and the Gospel writers want the reader of Daniel and the Gospels to understand.291

The OT, especially Daniel, permeates Revelation

No other book of the NT is as permeated by the OT as is Revelation. … Allusions and echoes are found in almost every verse of the book.292

Revelation contains more OT references than does any other NT book. … Roughly more than half the references are from Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and in proportion to its length, Daniel yields the most. … There is more agreement that Ezekiel exerts greater influence in Revelation than does

288 Apocalyptic Heritage, page 2
289 Apocalyptic Heritage, page 4
290 Apocalyptic Heritage, page xi
291 How Early Judaism, pages 1062-1063
292 Commentary NT use, page 1081
IV. Promises extended to the Gentiles

Daniel. Proportionally, Ezekiel ranks second as the most used OT book, although in terms of actual numbers of allusions Isaiah is first, followed by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Psalms. …

The OT in general plays such a major role that a proper understanding of its use is necessary for an adequate view of Revelation as a whole. …

In regard to the prophets, Isaiah and Ezekiel contribute significantly to John’s vision of the heavenly throne room in Rev. 4-5, and the promises of eschatological blessing in Isa. 40-66 permeate the vision of the new heaven and new earth (itself an Isaianic phrase) in Rev. 21-22.

Ezekiel provides the primary background for John’s prophetic self-understanding (see esp. Rev. 1:10, 17; 10:9-11), and John models his narrative of the final battle, judgment, and new Jerusalem precisely on Ezek. 37-48.

Zechariah provides some crucial imagery for John, notably the four horseman, the lampstands, and (in one of the rare OT quotations in Revelation) the statement that “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him” (Rev. 1:7; Zech. 1 2: 10).

Finally, the book of Daniel—chapter 7 in particular—provides a mother lode of material for John (e.g., it is likely the dominant influence in the vision of Rev. 4-5).

Revelation’s central theme of faithful witness in the midst of persecution derives directly from the stories in Daniel, as does the particular note that these witnesses triumph over the beast (Dan. 7; Rev. 13). John’s themes of judgment and the reign of the saints, though present elsewhere in the OT, arguably find their closest parallels in the vision of Dan. 7.

Book of Daniel had the greatest influence on the book of Revelation

No biblical work [than Daniel’s] has greater influence on the Apocalypse of John, a work written for a community under a pressure analogous to that which affected Jews in the second century B.C. 294

JUDAISM FOLLOWING THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

After the destruction of Jerusalem (70 CE), Judaism shifted from temple-based to text-based

After 70 C.E. there was a shift from a temple-based religion to a text-based religion in Judaism. This shift undoubtedly placed more importance and scrutiny on the scriptures than formerly. … There was a dramatic shift from the fluidity, pluriformity, and creativeness in composition of the text of the books of scripture to a “frozen” (not “standardized”) single textual form for each book. 295

The myth of Jamnia

Until several decades ago, many scholars assumed that the rabbis convened a council at Jamnia (modern Jabneh or Yavneh), during which they canonized the Bible. At the end of the nineteenth century, the great Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz had popularized this view, but it is now recognized to be wrong. Rabbinic literature associated with the sages of Jamnia (late first century C.E.) does discuss whether certain biblical books (such as Song of Songs or Esther) “defile the hands.” (That is the rabbis’ classic technical term for a work that is biblical.) However, as most historians now acknowledge, rabbinic texts from a later period are not reliable for reconstructing an earlier period. In addition, the literary form of these particular texts is suspect: they do not have the give-and-take of “real” rabbinic debates. Most likely, someone composed these “debate” texts to justify why the “problematic” (unsettling) books like Esther and Ecclesiastes were already part of the Bible. 296

Neither Josephus nor ancient Christian literature knows anything of a Council of Jamnia or of a closing of the canon of scripture at its sessions. 297

293 Commentary NT use, page 1082
294 Daniel, Goldingay, page xxix
295 Canon Debate, page 24
296 Jewish Bible, pages 274-275
297 Canon Debate, page 153
IV. Promises extended to the Gentiles

Books were discussed at Jamnia, but they were also discussed at least once a generation before and several times long after the Jamnia period. [Newman] saw the Jamnia rabbis testing a status quo which had existed beyond memory. “But no text of any specific decision has come down to us (nor, apparently, even to Akiba and his students),”

Frank M. Cross designates the Council of Jamnia “a common and somewhat misleading designation of a particular session of the rabbinitic academy (or court) at Yabneh. … Recent sifting of the rabbinic evidence makes clear that in the proceedings at the academy of Yabneh the Rabbis did not fix the canon, but at most discussed marginal books, notably Ecclesiastes (Qohelet) and the Song of Songs. ... Moreover, it must be insisted that the proceedings at Yabneh were not a ‘council,’ certainly not in the late ecclesiastical sense.”

Following the loss of the Jewish temple and its cultus, Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkaì requested permission from the Romans to establish a religious academy at Jamnia. … For more than a century, many scholars have taught that the Jews officially closed the third part of their biblical canon at the Council of Jamnia. … It is unlikely, however, that the Jewish religious leaders who gathered together (there was no council as such) at Jamnia around 90 C.E. made a final or binding decision about their biblical canon. … The Jewish religious teachers met at Jamnia after the destruction of Jerusalem to clarify how a religious faith that was once based on a temple and sacrificial cult could survive without these institutions. …

A Jamnia council decision is attractive, since no other prior time can be identified when a significant decision was made about the scope of the Hebrew biblical canon by the rabbinic teachers. No evidence, however, supports any formal action taken at Jamnia, and this view is largely abandoned today. The scope of the Hebrew biblical canon within Judaism was more likely settled in the second century C.E., and possibly even later than that. …

That the so-called Council of Jamnia did not stabilize the canon of the HB/OT is also seen in the widespread debate throughout the rabbinic period (i.e., second to sixth centuries C.E.) whether certain writings “deified the hands,” a rabbinic designation for a canonical text.

**Second major cluster of Jewish apocalyptic writings**

The second major cluster of Jewish apocalypses dates from the end of the first century C.E., in the aftermath of the Jewish revolt. 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and 3 Baruch are all reflections on the catastrophe that had come to pass.

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298 *Canon Debate*, page 153
299 *Canon Debate*, pages 161-162
300 *Biblical Canon*, pages 173, 174, 175
301 *History of Apocalypticism*, page 80
V. Promises keep being repeated

V. PROMISES KEEP BEING REPEATED

Events

Judaism.
Christianity.
2000 years

People

Jewish and
Christian leaders,
scholars,
historians, etc.
2000 years

Writings

Jewish and
Christian canons,
expositions,
histories,
commentaries, etc.
2000 years
V. Promises keep being repeated

**Figure 14: Promises keep being repeated through the centuries**
V. Promises keep being repeated

Figure 15: People do not learn the lesson that history teaches, so the dominoes keep falling
IT IS HAZARDOUS TO ASSUME SCRIPTURE TALKS OF ONE’S OWN TIME

Hazardous to claim that the book of Daniel directly refers to events of one’s own day

This effort at a theology of jubilee in Daniel 9 must take seriously the book’s interest in Antiochus IV and the events of his reign. Because Daniel’s visions have repeatedly received contemporary interpretations that later proved less than definitive, Goldingay sensibly warns that “it is hazardous to claim that the book directly refers to events of one’s own day, or to the key events on which one’s own faith is based” (Goldingay, Daniel, xxxix.)

Daniel C. Olson (“Historical Chronology after the Exile according to 1 Enoch 89-90,” JSP 15 [September 2005] 67) says, “As the history of interpretation of Daniel’s ‘70 weeks’ demonstrates all too well, people can and do exercise extraordinary ingenuity in order to make prophecies work when they want them to work.”

A second conclusion suggested by the history of the interpretation of Daniel is that it is hazardous to claim that the book directly refers to events of one’s own day, or to the key events on which one’s own faith is based. … It is salutary to note that earlier centuries of interpreters of various faiths have been able to relate these visions to events of their day by the same interpretative techniques that such twentieth-century Christian interpreters use, and it seems wise to allow for the possibility that the interpretations of the latter will also be falsified in due course.

Pesher assumes, as with the Qumran community, that Scripture is talking of one’s own time

The term pĕšar, interpretation, is used nineteen times in chapters 2, 4, and 5 to refer to Daniel’s explanation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams and the handwriting on the wall. … Daniel thus contains an early example of a type of interpretation of Scripture that is now well represented in the documents from Qumran. The assumption is that the Old Testament texts must be speaking of one’s own present and immediate future; in the Dead Sea Scrolls scripture is quoted, then its explanation is introduced with the Hebrew cognate to the word used in the Aramaic of Daniel, pišrō, “its interpretation (is).”

The visions were addressed to people who needed to hear them

The visions were written when people were not being promoted because of their faithfulness, but were being tortured to death. The date of the final form of the book saves us from dismissing the stories as “Sunday school stuff,” thinking [that] we realists know better. The people to whom the visions were addressed knew better also; but even so, they found something in the stories [that] they needed to hear.

Numerous expositors see prophecies fulfilled in their own time

Outside critical circles, writers continue to see specific prophecies fulfilled long after Daniel’s day, identifying the four kingdoms with Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, and taking some moment in the life of Christ to signify the last of Daniel’s seventy weeks. The most spectacular version refines the approach of Julius Africanus, reckoning the period from Artaxerxes’ edict in 445 B.C. to the crucifixion as 483 years to the day.

Other expositors see prophecies as fulfilled in their time: the 1967 Arab-Israeli war fulfills both 8:14, coming 2,300 years after Alexander, and 12:12, coming 1,335 years after the establishment of the Caliphate. More commonly, however, expositors who believe that many of Daniel’s visions are still to

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302 Antiochene Crisis, page 1
303 Daniel, Goldingay, page xxxix
304 Daniel, Gowan, page 33
305 Daniel, Gowan, page 37
be fulfilled avoid associating passages with dated events, expecting their fulfillment in events to come.\textsuperscript{306}

**Daniel influenced succeeding millennia**

“As a prediction of the end, [the book of Daniel] was a failure,” writes H. H. Rowley, “but as a powerful spiritual force it was a great success.” … The book of Daniel is the font of apocalyptic speculation, and its words and phrases have been mined for revelatory meanings over the last two thousand years. The Western apocalyptic tradition in its entirety has been characterized as “footnotes to the apocalyptic visions of Daniel.”\textsuperscript{307}

**Each new generation applied Revelation to their own generation**

That’s the strange and powerful magic of Revelation: each new generation of readers is convinced that God planted a secret meaning in the text that was meant only and especially for them. And, remarkably, the failure of each previous generation to crack the Revelation code only encourages the next generation to try harder.\textsuperscript{308}

Still, more than a few readers of Revelation in every age, including our own, have thrilled at the idea that the end is near. Indeed, they are perfectly willing to overlook the plain fact that the world has not ended as predicted, and they persist in poring over the text of Revelation in a fresh attempt to figure out the precise date when it will. They have always been wrong, too, of course, but nothing has discouraged the so-called date setters who study the text, crunch the numbers, and come up with dates when the world must end. Not a single century has passed since the ink dried on the first copy of Revelation without some new prediction of the precise date when its prophecies will finally come to pass.\textsuperscript{309}

**Revelation is a “language arsenal” that has stirred dangerous men and women**

Revelation has served as a “language arsenal” in a great many of the social, cultural, and political conflicts in Western history.” Again and again, Revelation has stirred some dangerous men and women to act out their own private apocalypses.\textsuperscript{310}

**The predictions of Revelation did not come to pass**

Surely the greatest of all the ironies in John’s life and work is the simple and unavoidable fact that the things he predicts in the book of Revelation did not come to pass quickly or, for that matter, at all. John himself would have been shocked and heartbroken to know that we are all still here to read what he wrote two thousand years ago. That is why the book of Revelation and the apocalyptic tradition in Judaism and Christianity have been called, aptly if also poignantly, “the history of a delusion.” To put it another way, Revelation is the history of the end of the world and the history of a world that refused to end.\textsuperscript{311}

**The world had persistently refused to end**

The authors of Daniel and Revelation were capable of imagining the end of the world, but human experience seemed to confirm that the world was not so easily destroyed. After all, the extermination of humankind and the destruction of human civilization had proved to be far beyond the will or the power of the barbarians, the armies of Islam, the Spanish armada, or the Napoleonic battalions, all of which were seen as the work of Satan. Over and over again, the world had persistently refused to end.\textsuperscript{312}

\textsuperscript{306} Daniel, Goldingay, page xxxviii
\textsuperscript{307} History of the End, page 40
\textsuperscript{308} History of the End, page 13
\textsuperscript{309} History of the End, pages 13-14
\textsuperscript{310} History of the End, page 18
\textsuperscript{311} History of the End, page 99
\textsuperscript{312} History of the End, page 209
V. Promises keep being repeated

EACH GENERATION APPLIES PROPHECIES TO ITS OWN TIME

Jesus announced the end would be seen by his contemporaries

Jesus, too, is depicted in the Gospels as announcing that the end is near. In fact, he quotes the book of Daniel—“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains”—and his description of the end-times is equally heart shaking but far more poignant when compared with those in Revelation. “And alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days!” Jesus is shown to say in the Little Apocalypse as it appears in the Gospel of Matthew. “Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now.”

Jesus, as we have noted, insists that at least some of his contemporaries will be eyewitnesses to the end of the world—eclipses of the sun and moon, stars falling from the sky, “famines and pestilences and earthquakes”—and the arrival of the Son of Man “in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” His assurances, so awkward for later teachers and preachers precisely because they are so plausibly wrong, can be found in both Mark—“Truly, I say to you there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power”—and Matthew: “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place.”

The first Christians expected they would witness the end of the world

The first Christians lived with the constant and urgent expectation that they would witness the end of the world. Paul’s First Epistle to the Thessalonians, for example, describes what has come to be called the “rapture”—that is, the sudden elevation of faithful Christians from earth to heaven upon the second coming of Jesus Christ: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first,” says Paul. “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” Paul’s unequivocal prediction, in fact, is contained in a letter that may have been composed as early as 49 C.E.—“the earliest datable witness to Christianity that we possess,” according to some scholars.

First century CE Jews applied Daniel to themselves

In contrast to the Christian uses of Daniel in the first century, Jewish texts found the stories of faithfulness under persecution to speak most directly to them.

First century apocalypses influenced by Daniel 7

Dan 7 also contributed to the apocalypses of Baruch and Ezra (both c. A.D. 80).

Josephus believed Daniel was speaking of the Roman Empire

Josephus, too, believes that Daniel wrote of Rome. His hesitancy over revealing the meaning of chap. 2 suggests that he assumes Rome is the fourth empire. The 490-years prophecy is fulfilled in the events of A.D. 66-70; Vespasian is the “prince to come” of that prophecy. But he assumes that [Daniel] chap. 11 refers to Antiochus, and uses Daniel broadly as a source for his retelling of the story of Israel from the exile—and uses Daniel himself, among others, as an anticipation, a type, of himself.

Various interpretations of Daniel’s “four kingdoms”

There are occasional witnesses [among the early Church Fathers] to the view that the four empires are Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece, or Babylon, Medo-Persia, Alexander, and the Hellenistic monarchies, the small horn being Antiochus and the humanlike figure and the holy ones on high

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313 History of the End, page 110
314 History of the End, page 110
315 History of the End, page 110
316 Daniel, Gowan, page 14
317 Daniel, Goldingay, page xxix
318 Daniel, Goldingay, pages xxix-xxx
standing for second-century B.C. Jews. Similarly, Dan 9:24-27 can be related to the Hellenistic period: thus Eusebius refers the cutting off of an anointed one (9:26) to the suffering of the postexilic priesthood.319

The interpretation of the empires as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome predominates among [early] Christians as among Jews, and writers often see themselves and their readers as thus near the End of which Daniel spoke. Barn[abas] 4.4 makes this explicit.320

Revelation influenced succeeding millennia

As a work of prophecy, of course, Revelation is wholly and self-evidently wrong. “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” demands the biblical author, quoting the souls of the dead martyrs, and he answers his own question by attributing an unambiguous promise to Jesus Christ: “Behold, I am coming soon.” (Rev. 6:10-11, 3:11, RSV) Those words were first reduced to writing nearly two thousand years ago, but the readers of Revelation are still waiting for the day of revenge that is predicted with such clarity and confidence in the ancient text.

The author of Revelation is not the only figure in Christian scriptures whose prediction of the end-times was mistaken. Jesus, according to some awkward sayings attributed to him in the Gospels, assures his followers that at least some of them will see the end of the world with their own eyes. The apostle Paul, in turn, offered the same assurance to his generation of Christians. Both Jesus and Paul were gone by the time the author of Revelation set down his vision of “things which must shortly come to pass.” (Rev. 1:1, KJV) All of them turned out to be dead wrong, and the world is still here.

The utter, obvious, and persistent failure of the world to “end on time,” as one contemporary Bible scholar wryly puts it, has compelled Christianity to reconsider how life ought to be lived in the here and now, no less in late antiquity than today. Once a Christian emperor seated himself on the imperial throne of pagan Rome in the early fourth century, all the bitter rhetoric of Revelation, so clearly aimed at the power and glory of the Roman Empire, was suddenly an embarrassment that needed to be explained away. By late antiquity, Revelation suddenly seemed less relevant than, say, the Gospel of Mark: “But when you hear of wars and rumors of war, do not be troubled,” Jesus is shown to sensibly caution his followers, “for such things must happen, but the end is not yet.” (Mark 13:7, RSV)

Fourth century upsurge of interest in Revelation

The images of the Apocalypse were used only rarely in Christian art and architecture prior to the fourth century. Then, abruptly, the sword-wielding Lamb of God and other iconic symbols of the end-times began to appear on sarcophagi, ivory carvings, murals, mosaics, and monumental paintings throughout Christendom. Alpha and omega, the Greek letters that John uses to evoke the creation and destruction of the world, are inscribed on artifacts ranging from a woman’s gold ring to a slave collar. So “sudden and profuse” was the eruption of apocalyptic imagery in Christian arts and crafts that one scholar characterizes the phenomenon as an “invasion”: the Apocalypse seemed to suddenly seize the imagination of both clergy and laity throughout Christendom, and the vengeful Christ of Revelation displaced the suffering Christ of the Gospels. …

The timing of the apocalyptic invasion is highly revealing. John may have intended the book of Revelation to console and exhort the persecuted Christians of his own era, but it was only when Christianity was both militant and triumphant that the imagery of the Apocalypse began to proliferate across Europe. Indeed, Revelation achieved its sudden and widespread prominence shortly after Emperor Theodosius formally raised Christianity to the status of the state religion of the Roman Empire in 391.321

319 Daniel, Goldingay, page xxxi
320 Daniel, Goldingay, page xxxi
321 History of the End, page 133
Three-and-a-half year period invoked throughout late antiquity and the Middle Ages

A North African bishop called Evodius of Uzala, for example, assured his congregation in 412 that Satan himself will reign over the world as the Antichrist for exactly three and a half years before Jesus Christ returns to earth in triumph, all as predicted in the book of Revelation. The same three-and-a-half-year period was invoked throughout late antiquity and the Middle Ages as the countdown to the end-times.

Eschatological expectation in the Medieval times

[The medieval period] was another period of eschatological expectation, and this is one aspect of the background to the writing of a number of commentaries on Daniel. There were apparently a number by Karaite authors, of which the most famous is that of Jephet ibn Ali (c. 1000) in Arabic.

Like the patristic commentators, the [medieval] Jewish exegetes want to understand Daniel in a way that relates it to their own day and is consistent with their theological views (e.g., that the messiah has not yet come). For both reasons Daniel’s visions are taken to come to their historical climax with the Moslem Arab empire or the Christendom of their day. The empires may then be Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome/the Arabs (a view Ibn Ezra refers to), or Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece-Rome, and the Arabs (Ibn Ezra himself), or Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome divided into Christendom and Islam (Ibn Yachya), or Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome /Christendom (Avravanel). The 1290 days/years were expected to terminate in 968 (Saadia), in 1352 (Rashi), in 1358 (Gersonides and others), while Avravanel promises that the 3½ periods, the 2,300 days/years, and the 1335 days/years will all end in 1503.

14th century: Beguines saw the church as the Antichrist

The Inquisitor’s Manual, composed in 1324 by Bernard Gui, singled out the so-called Beguines as an example of what can go wrong when Christians dare to read the book of Revelation for themselves. … Gui, in fact, readily concedes that the Beguines are perfectly confident of their ultimate victory over the “spiritual or mystical” Antichrist—that is, the church itself—and “the real, greater Antichrist,” who “has already been born” and will reveal himself in 1325, “according to some of them,” or perhaps 1330, or possibly 1335. “They say that the first Antichrist is that pope.”

15th and 16th century applications to their own day

The centuries of the medieval Jewish exegetes were the centuries of millenarian movements in Christian Europe. Revelation is their key biblical resource, but there is a striking appeal to Daniel in the anonymous Book of a Hundred Chapters. After the death of the German emperor Frederick I during the Crusades, prophets began to speak of a future Frederick as an Emperor of the Last Days. In the Book, written near the beginning of the sixteenth century, Frederick is one who will restore Germany to the position of supremacy God intended for her: Daniel’s four empires are France, England, Spain, and Italy, while Germany is the fifth and greatest empire, which will not pass away.

16th century: Martin Luther identified the Turks as the eschatological fourth beast

During the 1520s the advance of the Turks in Europe increased, and whereas Luther had earlier stressed that Antichrist was to be broken without hand, his Heerpredigt wider dem Türken (1529) not only identifies the Turks with the fourth beast but encourages people to join in the eschatological battle against them.
Luther was influenced by calculations prevalent in his time, similar to those used long before by Hippolytus but resulting in expectations focusing on the date 1530. At that time, Luther published a translation of Daniel with a long preface expressing his conviction that the end was near. While noting the encouragement and example offered by the stories [of Daniel], [Luther] gives most space to the visions. The four empires are Assyria-Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, the last living on in the German empire, currently threatened by the Turks—Mohammed being the small horn—but certain to survive until the final consummation of God’s kingdom. Though Antiochus appears in [Daniel] chaps. 8 and 11, these prophecies also point to Antichrist. 11:36-45 refers directly to Antichrist, who is identified with the celibate papacy (cf. vv 36-37).

16th century: John Knox applied Daniel to the Papacy

In 1547 John Knox preached his first sermon as pastor at St Andrews, on Dan 7:24-25 applied to the papacy. … In mid-sixteenth-century England the natural way to apply the passages about the small horn was to the papacy. But these years see a decline in the popularity of Daniel. … The latter part of the [sixteenth] century saw both a lively general sense that the End was imminent and a sporadic interest in calculating its actual date, but Daniel does not seem to have contributed to this, though Joye had offered some calculations that pointed to the end of the [sixteenth] century in his commentary.

16th century: Joseph Mede expected the end to come in 1716 or in 1736

The next step in the development of apocalypticism that affected how Americans viewed the millennium came through Joseph Mede (1586-1638), a nonconformist with Anglican sympathies, master of Christ College, Cambridge. … According to Mede’s eschatology, Antichrist’s reign of 1260 years was to be dated either from 456, the fall of Rome under Genseric the Vandal or twenty years later, in 476, when the last of the Roman emperors, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed by Odoacer the Hun. Antichrist’s fall, Satan’s binding, and Christ’s second coming—all could therefore be expected either in 1716 or 1736.

17th century: Aspinall applied Daniel to his own times

As ecclesiastical and political events developed, Antichrist came to be seen not only in the Roman church but in the Church of England and in the monarchy. Aspinwall in his Explication . . . of the Seventh Chapter of Daniel (1654) sees Charles I as the small horn, England, Scotland, and Wales as the three horns that were broken off, the Puritan parliament as the holy ones, the Puritans’ rule as the kingdom Daniel speaks of: the fifth monarchy is now beginning.

17th century: Tillinghast predicted the end to come in 1656

In 1653 the fifth monarchist Tillinghast redated the beginning of the 1290 years to 366, when the temple was actually destroyed, so that it would now end in 1656.

Daniel chapters 2 and 7 stimulated centuries of missionary movements

The historical approach to interpretation practiced by writers such as Calvin and Broughton did not prevent them from expecting a future fulfillment of OT prophecies of the world’s acknowledgment of God, an expectation taken up by the Puritans, with the encouragement of passages such as Dan 2:34-35, 44; 7:26-27; this was to be one important stimulus for the development of the missionary movements of the next two centuries.
17th century: The “Fifth Monarchy Men” were the saints of Daniel 7

In seventeenth-century England, during the rule of the Puritans, a group known as the Fifth Monarchy Men claimed to be the saints of Dan 7:18, and during their short-lived career predicted that Cromwell’s rule would come to an end after three and one-half years (in 1657).335

18th century: The First Great Awakening of the American revival

The revival movement in America was “the forerunner of something vastly great,” according to Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), the Puritan minister whose preaching sparked the so-called First Great Awakening in the mid-eighteenth century. Not incidentally, Edwards was the author of a vast commentary on Revelation titled Notes on the Apocalypse. Starting with the prophecy in Revelation that the Antichrist will reign for 1,260 “days,” which he interpreted to mean “years,” Edwards decided that the reign of the arch-demon had begun in 606 and calculated that it would end sometime around 1866. And he saw the convulsions of the Great Awakening as “signs of the millennium lately begun in Northampton”—that is, the Massachusetts town where his own pulpit was located.336

19th century: Leaders saw Daniel being fulfilled in their own day

“Leading British churchmen and theologians” and “leading British radicals and socialists”—not a mere lunatic fringe—continued to see events of their day as the fulfillment of Daniel’s visions and of other prophetic material in Scripture. A New England farmer, William Miller, decided from Dan 8:14 that the world would end in 1843, 2,300 years after 457 B.C.337

Other writers continued to expound Daniel as they always had, finding edification in the stories, and from the visions finding insight on contemporary history, and making extrapolations regarding twentieth-century history that we now know to have been mistaken and extrapolations beyond the twentieth century that we cannot yet check out: Dan 4:19 refers to the French Revolution (Seeley, 1849); 8:14 refers to the year 1867, when the papacy will fall (Graves, 1854), to a renewed cleansing to come in 2132 (Rule, 1869), to the events of the year 1814 (Murphy, 1885), or to Isaac Newton (Sadler, 1895); 11:36-39 refers to the French Revolution (U. Smith, 1897). The interpreters are Protestant and the interpretations match.338

19th century: William Miller expected the end around 1843

Even in the New World, for example, and even in an era of peace and prosperity, the prospect of the second coming of Jesus Christ and the end of the world was a thrilling notion to otherwise comfortable and complacent Americans like an upstate New York farmer whose name was William Miller (1782-1849). … He calculated that the second coming of Jesus Christ and the beginning of the end of the world would take place “sometime around 1843.

“I believe,” wrote Miller, “that the Scriptures do reveal unto us in plain language that Jesus Christ will appear again on this earth, that he will come in the glory of God, in the clouds of heaven, with all his Saints and angels.”339

In American history, the most sensational example of date-setting based on Daniel occurred in the mid—nineteenth century. William Miller took 457 BC to be the date when Artaxerxes I commissioned Ezra to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:1), and identified this date with the going forth of a word “to restore and rebuild Jerusalem” in Dan 9:25.

Assuming that days in Daniel equal years (as others have done), he then added the number 2,300, from Dan 8:14, to 457 BC and concluded that the Second Coming could be expected in AD 1843. He convinced large numbers of people, and when nothing happened in 1843, he recalculated and announced a specific date, October 22, 1844. His failure did not bring to an end this sort of misuse of

335 Daniel, Gowan, page 17
336 History of the End, pages 180-181
337 Daniel, Goldingay, page xxxvii
338 Daniel, Goldingay, page xxxvii
339 History of the End, page 183
Promises keep being repeated

Daniel (and Revelation) in American Christianity, however. … This is the sort of use of the book that most Americans are likely to encounter in religious television and popular religious books.340

19th century: Invention of the “Rapture” by Darby; followed by Scofield and Moody

A plain reading of Revelation suggests that everyone on earth in the endtimes—men, women, and children, saints and sinners alike—will be compelled to endure the suffering to be inflicted on humankind by the Antichrist during the final years of persecution and oppression known as the Tribulation. Only after the Tribulation is over will the dead saints and martyrs be raised from the grave and allowed to enjoy their just rewards in the kingdom to come.

Certain cheerful Christians in nineteenth-century America, however, refused to believe that they would be called upon to endure such afflictions, and they insisted on embracing a new and highly inventive version of the end of the world. Christians who are worthy of salvation, they preferred to believe, will be miraculously plucked up and elevated to heaven before the Tribulation begins in earnest. Seated in the galleries of heaven, they will be privileged to look down and watch as everyone who has been left behind on earth suffers and dies under the Antichrist.341

19th century: Special hope offered for the Jewish people

It was only in the late nineteenth century—and principally in America—that the idea of the Rapture was elevated into an article of faith among Christian fundamentalists. Indeed, the whole idea has been credited to an Anglo-Irish preacher named John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). …

Among those who propagated Darby’s teachings throughout America was a preacher named Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899). … The other crucial American convert to Darby’s reading of Revelation was Cyrus R. Scofield (1843-1921). … Between Moody and Scofield, in fact, the newfangled idea of the Rapture and the various other theological innovations of John Nelson Darby achieved the status of received truth in the early years of the twentieth century. …

The Protestant fundamentalists in America always looked on the sunny side of doomsday. … “Let us remember one thing,” John Darby had announced back in the mid-nineteenth century, “we Christians are sheltered from the approaching storm.” … John Darby offered a startling new way to understand the story of Revelation and, especially, the special fate that was reserved for the Jewish people in the end-times.

Of all the ironies that have come to be attached to the book of Revelation, none is quite so strange as the love-hate relationship between its fundamentalist readers in America and the Jewish people. … “Christian Zionism” sometimes seems like an oxymoron precisely because the Christian apocalyptic tradition has always carried an ugly stain of anti-Semitism. … Some otherwise anti-Semitic readers of Revelation held out the faint hope that at least some Jews would spare themselves the fires of hell by belatedly embracing Jesus Christ as the Messiah. …

Apocalyptic legend and lore imagined that the Jewish people would return to the land of Israel at the end of days—but only with deadly consequences. … A much brighter picture was painted by the apocalyptic preachers of the New World. Increase Mather predicted in The Mystery of Israel’s Salvation Explained and Applied (1669) that the Jewish people would be “brought into their own land again” and that, once they returned to the site of ancient Israel, they would convert to Christianity and become “the most glorious nation in the world.” … But, like the Rapture, the repatriation of the Jewish people took on a new degree of power and authority in the teachings of John Darby. … To sum up Darby’s elaborate theory, he taught that God has devised one fate for the Jewish people and a different fate for the Christian church—but the two phases of the divine plan for the end of the world are interrelated, and so the final salvation of Christians depends on the destiny that God has assigned to the Jewish people.

340 Daniel, Gowan, page 17
341 History of the End, page 190
Since Darby was convinced that all biblical prophecy must be fulfilled, including the prophecies in the Hebrew Bible that were addressed to the Israelites, he concluded that God will keep his promise to restore the land of Israel to the Chosen People and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem before bringing the world to an end. Indeed, the gathering of the Jewish people in their ancient homeland in Palestine came to be seen as both a sign and a necessary precondition of the Second Coming, the defeat of Satan, and the creation of the New Heaven and the New Earth. …

By a fateful coincidence, the divine plan for the Jewish people in Darby’s scenario of the end-times coincided with the emergence of modern political Zionism in the mid-nineteenth century. The Zionist movement was motivated by political rather than religious impulses; the Zionists sought to rescue Jewish men, women, and children from the dangers of anti-Semitism in Europe, and they believed that Jewish statehood was essential to Jewish survival. 342

19th century: Numerous speculative commentaries

Speculation and founded communities in this period is almost endless. Thomas Lake Harris (1823-1906), the Spiritualist founder of Mountain Cove in Virginia and later of the brotherhood of the New Life in New York and Fountain Grove in California; Peter Armstrong (1800-1892), an ex-Millerite who established Celesta in Pennsylvania; William W. Davies (1833-1906), a convert to the Morristown sect of Mormonism who eventually founded the Kingdom of Heaven in Washington state; and Cyrus Read Teed (1839-1909), founder of the Koreshan Unity, located first in Chicago and later in Florida—these examples document the geographical distribution of such communities. Almost all such groups had difficulty surviving after the death of the founder. One denomination with a distinctive interpretation of the Apocalypse that did survive following the death of its founder, Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), was Christian Science. 343

19th century: The Shakers; Latter-day Saints; Charles Taze Russell

One group, The Shakers, whose greatest numerical expansion was in the 1840s, began a steady decline in membership and a geographical retreat following the Civil War. … By contrast with the Shakers, the Latter-day Saints expanded rapidly during this period. … The most successful new apocalyptic group to arise during this second period came from the efforts of Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916), a Congregationalist layman in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, who established study groups, which he organized as the International Bible Students’ Association in 1872. His study of the Bible focused on the prophetic sections. Russell adopted a radical adventist position, maintaining that the millennial dawn already had occurred in 1874 and that the end would be in 1914. But according to his interpretation, Christ had not returned to earth at the former date; rather his return had been spiritual. 344

One notable example of the fresh outbreak of apocalyptic fever began with Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916), a haberdasher from Pennsylvania whose reading of Revelation and the other apocalyptic texts convinced him that the first stirrings of the millennium had already commenced. … Russell, like so many other apocalyptic preachers before and after him, was daring enough to set a date for doomsday. He fixed 1874 as the starting date of the countdown clock, and he predicted that the reign of Jesus Christ would begin forty years later—that is, in 1914. 345

19th century: Sandford; Purnell; Pentacostalism

Frank Weston Sandford (1862-1948), a Baptist minister from Maine interested in biblical prophecy, began receiving visions dealing with apocalyptic topics. He resigned his pulpit and in 1895 opened the Holy Ghost and Us Bible School in Durham, Maine. …

Another prophetic figure who emerged during this period was Benjamin Purnell (1861-1927), a native of Kentucky who itinerated as a preacher in the Midwest before joining a sect known as the New House of Israel in 1892. When that group broke up, he announced his own messianic mission. In 1903

342 History of the End, pages 191-196
343 History of Apocalypticism, page 503
344 History of Apocalypticism, pages 503-504
345 History of the End, page 203
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Purnell relocated in Benton Harbor, Michigan, and founded a celibate community called the House of David, which, he declared, was to be the location of the “gathering in.” He took the name King Benjamin and called his wife Queen Mary. Purnell predicted that the millennium would begin in 1905. …

Far more significant was the emergence after the turn of the century of Pentecostalism, a new family of outsider religious groups. Derived in great part from Holiness churches, this movement reflected apocalyptic ideas widely disseminated in those assemblies.346

**The Great War of 1914-1918 sparked apocalyptic speculation**


The First World War was dubbed “the war to end all wars” by optimistic and high-minded propagandists—a phrase that certainly applies to Armageddon—but the conflagration turned out to be neither the end of war nor the end of the world. Still, the terror and tumult of the Great War sparked the same kind of apocalyptic speculation that had attended every war in Western history since the sack of Rome in the fifth century. 348

**20th century: Explosive growth of interest in apocalyptic**

The modern period has also seen an explosive growth in study of apocalyptic.349

In 1910, the two brothers who owned Union Oil Company, Lyman and Milton Stewart, sponsored the free distribution of 3 million copies of The Fundamentals, a series of pamphlets designed to win Protestant clergy across America to the credo of Christian fundamentalism. And the Stewart brothers also paid for the distribution of some seven hundred thousand copies of William E. Blackstone’s apocalyptic manifesto, Jesus Is Coming, to the same influential readership.

Such lavish efforts prompted a kind of third great awakening in the opening years of the twentieth century—“more than three hundred separate denominational bodies,” according to Paul Boyer, “all committed to belief in Christ’s premillennial return.” The ancient apocalyptic ideas of the book of Revelation, as revised and reinvigorated by the teachings of John Darby, attracted men and women across the spectrum of Christian belief and practice, ranging from the old-line Protestant churches to the Pentecostalists, who embraced such practices as speaking in tongues and the laying on of hands.350

**20th century: Christabel Pankhurst on the “promised return of Jesus Christ”**

Christabel Pankhurst (1880-1958) was transformed by the experience of the First World War from a famously militant feminist into a stump speaker for the premillennialist cause and “the promised return of Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords,” as she witnessed in one of her own works of biblical prophecy.351

**1917: Toppling of Russian Czar seen as fulfilment of Ezekiel’s prophecy**

Viewed through the lens of biblical prophecy, in fact, the shattering events of the First World War made perfect sense to the apocalyptic mind. Russia was identified as the biblical kingdom of Gog, and the toppling of the czar by the Bolsheviks in 1917 was seen as the fulfillment of a prophecy in the book of Ezekiel: “Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog.”

The Balfour Declaration of 1917, which committed Great Britain to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and the liberation of Jerusalem from the Turks in 1918 by the British

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346 *History of Apocalypticism*, page 505
347 *History of the End*, page 203
348 *History of the End*, page 204
349 *Daniel*, Goldingay, page xxxvii
350 *History of the End*, pages 202-203
351 *History of the End*, page 204
army, were interpreted as “the beginning of a series of events that are destined to establish God’s kingdom here upon earth,” according to an enthusiastic Bible commentator named E. L. Langston.  

20th century: Signs produced anticipation in Christian circles
Like Daniel in Babylon, like John in pagan Rome, men and women in twentieth-century America were ready to see signs of the approaching end all around them. “Wars and rumors of war” produced a constant and mounting thrum of anticipation in Christian circles. For them, as for readers of Revelation across the last twenty centuries, even the bad news could be seen as good news.  

20th century: The number 666 applied to a string of contemporary candidates
Thus did Revelation begin to work its old magic on the hearts and minds of otherwise modern men and women. At various points in the long history of the ancient text, as we have seen, the number 666 was understood to identify Nero, Alaric, Muhammad, or Napoleon. Now the same number was variously understood by the latest generation of apocalyptic codebreakers to reveal the names of Lenin and Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini, even Franklin Delano Roosevelt—all depending on the specific political stance of the beholder.  

20th century: Reagan feared the number 666; current events fulfilled biblical prophecy
Revelation has come to be regarded by certain men and women in positions of power and influence as a source of inspiration, if not a divine handbook, for the conduct of war, diplomacy, and statecraft in the real world. When Ronald Reagan moved into a house whose street number was 666, he insisted on changing the address to a less satanic number, and he readily interpreted an otherwise unremarkable coup in Libya as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy: “That’s a sign that the day of Armageddon isn’t far off,” he declared. “Everything’s falling into place. It can’t be long now.”  

1967 Six-Day War and Jerusalem’s liberation hailed as “a forward leap”
Just as an earlier generation of Christian Zionists had thrilled at the Balfour Declaration and the liberation of Jerusalem by the British army in 1918, their latter-day counterparts celebrated Israel’s lightning victory in the Six Day War of 1967 and, above all, the liberation of the Old City of Jerusalem. Here stands the Temple Mount, the site of the original Temple of Yahweh as described in the Bible and the place where, according to the beliefs of both Jewish and Christian fundamentalists, the Third Temple will be built in the end-times. Significantly, the Temple Mount now passed under Jewish sovereignty for the first time since the Second Temple was destroyed by a Roman army in 70 C.E.  

“The hands on Israel’s prophecy clock” leaped forward on June 8, 1967,” writes Tim LaHaye in The Beginning of the End, an apocalyptic tract that long predates the Left Behind series, “when the Israeli troops marched into the Old City of Jerusalem.”  

According to some Christian Zionists, as we have seen, the beginning of the end would commence in the fortieth year after the establishment of the modern state of Israel. A former NASA rocket engineer named Edgar Whisenant argued the case in 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988, where he predicts that the Tribulation would begin on October 3, 1988—Rosh Hashanah, the first day of the new year on the Jewish ritual calendar—and the Battle of Armageddon would break out exactly seven years later. … The failure of the Rapture to arrive on time did nothing to cool the ardor of Christian Zionists.
And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England’s mountains green:
And was the holy Lamb of God,
On England’s pleasant pastures seen!

And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold;
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England’s green & pleasant Land.

“Would to God that all the Lord’s people were Prophets”
(Numbers chapter 11, verse 29.)

“And did those feet in ancient time”,
William Blake
Figure 16: “And did those feet in ancient time”, William Blake
Strange as it may at first seem, there is a long tradition that the lost tribes of Israel escaped from captivity and, migrating ever westwards, eventually settled in Britain. Whether or not this migration actually happened or is merely a myth, the idea undoubtedly had a profound effect upon the development of Britain as a world power. More specifically, there is clear evidence that this esoteric undercurrent linking Britain with Israel influenced intellectual circles in the sixteenth century and was one of the chief motivating factors behind the English Reformation.

It is my contention that in the seventeenth century an attempt was made to rebuild London as the New Jerusalem. This idea resonates in William Blake’s words to the hymn ‘Jerusalem’, now in effect the alternative national anthem of England, which are based on a very real belief: that Christian Britain was identifiable as the successor state of ancient Israel. Blake lived at a critical time (1757-1827) in the history of Britain. It is clear from his writings that, witnessing the beginnings of an industrial revolution that was to reshape the world, he was appalled at the human cost of industrialization as more and more people were sucked into the capital from the surrounding countryside to tend its ‘satanic mills’. He was keenly aware of the paradox between the London he saw around him and the archetypal city of New Jerusalem described at the end of the book of Revelation. Yet for all this he seems to have believed in Britain’s destiny as the latter-day Israel. The verse we know as ‘Jerusalem’ was an affirmation of his faith and hope that the New Jerusalem would fare better than the old.357

Over a period of time the idea that the British were really Israelites in disguise gradually displaced the earlier legends, recorded by Geoffrey of Monmouth and others, that they came from Troy. … During the Wars of the Roses from 1455 to 1485, the dynastic claims of the major participants were of primary importance, and that the Yorkist King Edward IV had his genealogy mapped out on a scroll 18 feet long, tracing his ancestry right back to Jehoshaphat and the kings of Judah. King Henry VIII too seems to have regarded himself as not just a Protestant king but an Israeliite. … The notion that the British were Israelites continued as a theme in the writings of many authors right up to and long after the time of Queen Elizabeth. … During the Elizabethan period there were many who believed in Britain’s perceived destiny as Israel reborn: that Britain would succeed where the earlier nation had failed and would ensure that God’s plans for the redemption of the world came to fruition.358

Drake was not only an ardent royalist but seems also to have believed in Britain’s identity with Israel. In 1587 he wrote a letter to a famous preacher called James Foxe. Towards the end of this letter, Drake asked that prayers be said so that ‘God may be glorified, his church, our queen [Elizabeth I] and country preserved, that we may have continual peace in Israel.’ It goes without saying that by ‘Israel’ he meant England.359

[In the mid-seventeenth century], Britain was believed by many to be a holy land that was especially blessed by God as the place appointed for the regathering of the scattered tribes of Israel.360

**London, cleansed by fire, would be the ‘New Jerusalem’**

King James I, in his rebuilding scheme for Aldersgate, indicated his belief that London was to be equated with Jerusalem, the capital of ancient Israel. Strange as it may seem, the evidence is that in the late seventeenth century an attempt was made physically to transform London into a version of the New Jerusalem. This seems to be the great secret at the heart of a building scheme masterminded by Sir Christopher Wren; one so extraordinary that it deserves careful examination. The logic behind this scheme was that the lions of England and Scotland were to be equated with the lion of Judah, and as such indicated that Britain was now God’s especial kingdom: Israel.
The old Jerusalem had failed to keep to God’s covenants but London, having been purged of its sins by cleansing fire, would take its place as the ‘New Jerusalem’. Where once it had been a warren of fetid streets, it was now to be rebuilt out of white Portland stone to show that it was indeed the city of light.

In London, the New Jerusalem, there was to be a great instauration of the covenants between God and man. King Solomon’s Temple, emblemized and mythologized by Francis Bacon, would be rebuilt, and it would be linked to the imperishable throne of David that, as the Stone of Scone, underpinned the coronation throne. This seems to have been the secret plan of England’s fraternity of Rosicrucian Freemasons. The man charged with the realization of this plan was himself almost certainly a Freemason of the highest order: Christopher Wren.\[^{361}\]

In the seventeenth century more and more people became convinced that Britain had a special role in the world: a destiny which they believed was linked to the holy covenants established between God and man at the time of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and Solomon. The idea that St Paul came to Britain and preached in London chimed with the concept that the British themselves (or at least some of them) were descended from the lost tribes of Israel. It seemed obvious that Paul — and possibly other apostles such as Joseph of Arimathea — had come to Britain because they knew it was the land where the lost tribes were gathering. It was God’s wish that the Britons be now converted to Christianity so that they could fulfil their destiny in Christ. These speculations were to find their ultimate expression two hundred years later in the Victorian age with the formation of the British Israel movement.

They are pivotal to our understanding of the symbolism implicit in the structure of the new cathedral of St Paul’s that was built under the supervision of Sir Christopher Wren. It is because he was a high initiate from before the time of Freemasonry’s decadence that William Stirling describes St Paul’s as ‘the last of the old cathedrals’. This, however, is not an entirely accurate description, for Wren’s cathedral was really emblematic of something else: the Temple of Solomon.\[^{362}\]

Wren was able to embed into the very structure of his masterpiece, the new St Paul’s Cathedral, the very essence of the British Israel philosophy.\[^{363}\]

The development of Victorian Britain as the first great power of the industrial age went hand in hand with the growth of the British Israel movement. …

During the nineteenth century these ideas were to be developed from amorphous traditions into a systematized creed. The first prophet of what, to his critics at least, seemed like a new religion was a Scot from Kilmarnock named John Wilson. He commenced his work of evangelizing the nation in 1837 — the same year that Queen Victoria ascended the throne. The following year he began lecturing at the Witness Hall in Aldersgate Street, London. Two years later, in 1840, he published a book, Our Israelitish Origin, based on these lectures. It was hugely successful and in 1874 the ‘Anglo-Israel Association’ was founded, holding its meetings in Wilson’s house near St Pancras.

Wilson’s message, that the British were descended from the lost tribes of Israel and that this could be proved from the Bible, was in tune with the mood of the period. …

The British Israel torch lit by Wilson was eagerly taken up by another evangelist for the cause, Edward Hine. A younger man than Wilson, he attended the latter’s lectures in his youth and wrote what was to become a best-seller on the subject: Forty-seven Identifications of the British Nation with the Lost House of Israel, Founded upon 500 Proofs. This remarkable book, which went into enormous

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\[^{361}\] New Jerusalem, page 275
\[^{362}\] New Jerusalem, pages 298-299
\[^{363}\] New Jerusalem, page 309
detail in analysing the Bible for texts supportive of the identification of the descendants of the lost Israelites with both the Celts and the Anglo-Saxons, sold over 416,000 copies. …

Another prominent British Israelite was Charles Piazzi Smyth, then the Astronomer Royal for Scotland. He too had attended some of Wilson’s lectures and was convinced of the truth of what he heard because it chimed with another passion of his: pyramidology. The origins of this movement, which for a time ran in parallel with British Israelitism before being virtually taken over by it. …

Piazzi Smyth made his own survey of the pyramids, finding further proof that the Great Pyramid was designed not just as a calendar but as an almanac of the ages. He believed that the lengths of its internal corridors, as measured in pyramid inches, mapped out the course of world civilization, with each pyramid inch representing one year. The role of Britain as ‘Israel’ was read into the measures of mute stones. … The Grand Gallery symbolized the Christian era and the ascent of true Christians to the light. …

Today, given the prevailing scepticism of modern society concerning the existence of God, it is difficult to appreciate the powerful influence the idea that they were really Israelites in disguise had on Britons of the mid- to late nineteenth century. 364

Paradoxically, it was during the First World War that the British Israel movement reached the height of its popularity. In part this was because, during this time of great suffering, people were attracted to a system of ideas that ‘proved’ they were God’s chosen people; it gave reassurance that in the end things would turn out well.

There were, however, more specific reasons for thinking that ‘Shiloh’ was soon to come and that the sceptre, held in trust by Britain for so many centuries, would soon be returned to its true owner: Jesus Christ the Messiah. …

The climax of these events came on 11 December 1917 when General Allenby, the field marshal in charge of the British expeditionary forces, received the surrender of the keys of Jerusalem. This took place at the Citadel, next to the Jaffa Gate, which stands on the spot where King Herod had his palace and Jesus was tried before his crucifixion. Allenby was a devout man and a British Israel sympathizer; his nephew, the present Viscount Allenby of Megiddo, is not only president of the Anglo-Israeli Archaeological Society but also patron of the British-Israel World Federation. …

For British Israelites the delivery of Jerusalem seemed prophetic in the extreme. Jerusalem had been under the rule of non-Israelite, Gentile powers ever since the destruction of King Herod’s temple in AD 70. With the surrender of the city to British forces, it was now back under ‘Israelite’ (i.e. British) control. As it had been prophesied in the Bible that this would only occur in the ‘latter days’, shortly before the last judgement, it seemed to many to indicate that the end was nigh. As further confirmation that this was so, according to a number of prophecies in the Bible, prior to the return of the Messiah there would be a great battle fought at ‘Armageddon’, the Hill of Megiddo in the Jezreel valley. Allenby’s victory in a battle fought at this very site — for which he was awarded the title Viscount Allenby of Megiddo — seemed further evidence that prophecies for the end of days were being fulfilled.

In 1918, with the Great War over, there was a widespread feeling that the end-days were about to begin. Jerusalem was now in British hands, and so too (or so it was believed by British Israelites the world over) was the throne of David and Solomon — safely ensconced inside the coronation throne at Westminster.

This was seen as a preparation for the imminent return of Jesus Christ, who could be expected to sit on the throne of David, either ruling the world from its present location in ‘New Jerusalem’ (London) or, if he preferred, moving it back to ‘Old Jerusalem’ in Palestine.

In preparation for this momentous event, in 1919 a number of independent ‘identity’ groups amalgamated to form the ‘British-Israel World Federation’. Patroness of this new society was

364 New Jerusalem, pages 356-361
Princess Alice, countess of Athlone, who was herself a granddaughter of Queen Victoria and thus a descendant of the royal house of Great Britain.

Princess Alice, like everyone else involved with the British Israel movement at the time, must have imagined that the period of waiting would be short; that within her own lifetime ‘all these things would be accomplished’. However, this was not to be. …

Cracks were also beginning to appear in the British Empire. … The most important of these, if only because it was closest to home, was in Ireland. … Twenty-six counties seceded from the Union of Great Britain altogether to become the Irish Free State. For British Israelites, who believed that the Stone of Destiny had been brought to Ireland by Jeremiah the prophet prior to its removal to Scotland, this was incomprehensible. How could the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland be split up in this way at the very moment when it should be celebrating Christ’s imminent return as king over Israel? What strange twist of fate was it that would separate the Israelites of Ireland from the rest of the Holy Kingdom of Britain?

No answer could be found to this question at the time, and it still hangs in the air today.365

365 *New Jerusalem*, pages 375-379