

New Testament Background 2

Judaism of the 1st Century

While the New Testament cannot be understood apart from the Old Testament, the student interested in understanding the New Testament cannot go directly from the biblical text to the early Christian writings, but must also be informed by the Judaism that emerged in the intertestamental period. Five brief illustrations: (1) In the Old Testament, the term “Messiah” refers primarily to the anointed king of Israel or Judah, and is never applied to the savior figure expected in the eschatological future. The Judaism of the first century CE had no contemporary Jewish king, and after 70 CE applied messianic terminology to a variety of figures still to come. (2) The concept of resurrection is almost totally absent from the Jewish Scriptures, barely making it into the latest book (Dan 12: 2– 3). Yet when the New Testament opens, resurrection is a commonly accepted idea in first-century Judaism, not introduced by Jesus and his followers, but assumed by friend and foe alike (Mark 6: 14; John 11: 24). (3) When the New Testament cites the Jewish Scriptures, it often gives a version of the text different from what we find in our Old Testament, and sometimes cites books not found in our Old Testament. Thus, for example, Matthew 1: 23 cites Isaiah 7: 14 in a form not found in the Hebrew text, Matthew 2: 23 cites a text of uncertain provenance not found in our Old Testament at all, and Jude 14– 15 cites 1 Enoch 1:9, [and 2 Tim 3:8 notes information not found in the OT, but likely coming from a now-lost text such as The Assumption of Moses]. (4) Stories and events are understood in terms of later (intertestamental period) interpretations, not only as found in the Jewish Scriptures. (5) The Old Testament knows of tabernacle and temple, but no synagogues. When the New Testament opens, the synagogue is central in Jewish life. (Boring, 85)

Diaspora Judaism (from Greek meaning “dispersed”) – For centuries before the birth of Jesus, the number of Jews living outside of Palestine had been increasing. Dating back to the Old Testament times there were numerous Jews in Persia and Mesopotamia. In Egypt, they had even built a temple in the seventh century BCE, and another five centuries later. Much of the dispersion had begun during times when Israel and Judah were conquered and the people either fled or were exiled, but many of these scattered Jews had chosen not to return, but to build their own communities in other places. By the time of Jesus, there were sizable Jewish communities in every major city in the Roman Empire. Diaspora Judaism is of crucial importance for the history of Christianity, for it was one of the main avenues through which the new faith expanded throughout the Roman Empire. Furthermore, Diaspora Judaism provided the growing church with one of its most useful tools, the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. (Gonzalez, 17-18)

In the first century some five to six million Jews were living in Diaspora, that is, more or less permanently settled outside Palestine. The Diaspora had begun at least as early as the deportations of the Babylonian exile, in the sixth century, and had been fed by subsequent dislocations through successive conquests of the homeland, but even more by voluntary emigration in search of better economic opportunities than the limited space and wealth of Palestine could afford. Consequently there was a substantial Jewish population in virtually every town of any size in the lands bordering the Mediterranean. Estimates run from 10 to 15 percent of the total population of a city – in the case of Alexandria, perhaps even higher. (Meeks, 34)

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For legal purposes the Romans classified the Jewish groups in each city as collegia; when Caesar ordered all collegia disbanded except certain long-established groups, the synagogues were among those explicitly exempted. In several respects the identification was a natural one, for the organization of the Jewish community shared a number of traits with clubs, guilds, and cultic associations. The members gathered in a particular place, which served both cultic and social functions. They depended on benefactions of patrons, including non-Jewish sympathizers as well as wealthy members of the congregation, whom they rewarded by inscriptions, special seats in the assembly room, and honorary titles like "Father" or "Mother of the Synagogue." The community provided for the burial of its dead. It had offers and titles that imitated those of the polis. (Meeks, 35)

Their strict monotheism, their "imageless" worship, the strong cohesion of their communities won admiration among many of their pagan neighbors, leading some to become outright proselytes, others to become sympathizers or even formal adherents to the synagogue. Yet these same qualities, added to the size and wealth of many of the Jewish communities, provoked others of their neighbors to resentment and jealousy. One story that made the rounds was a vicious parody of the Exodus, according to which the people whom Moses organized into a nation were lepers who had been expelled from Egypt. That, it was said, explained why the Jews were antisocial, refusing "to share a table with any other race." From their side, the Jews knew that their very identity depended upon their maintaining some distinct boundaries between themselves and "the nations." Yet they also found themselves under strong pressures to conform to the dominant culture of the cities for reasons of expediency. Moreover, many of them experienced a powerful attraction to the values of that culture. Philo writes an elegant, rhetorical Greek; it is doubtful whether he knew any more Hebrew than he might have found in some handbook interpreting biblical names. He read Plato in terms of Moses, and Moses in terms of Plato, to the point that he was convinced that each had said essentially the same things. At the same time, Philo saw the importance of the Jews' preserving their distinctive identity. The individualism that Philo castigates was the specific temptation of people like himself: wealthy, cultured, and "Greek in soul as well as speech." (Meeks, 36-37)

Popular treatments of early Christianity and early Judaism have focused so one-sidedly on Palestine and especially on the failed revolts of 66-70 and 132-135 that we tend to think of Rome as the implacable enemy of the Jews. The documents collected by Josephus, the two political tracts of Philo, and other evidence suggest rather that Jews of the cities more often regarded Rome as their protector. During the two Palestinian revolts, the Jews of the diaspora cities seem to have offered almost no direct support to the revolutionaries, and they suffered no visible consequences of the latter's defeat. Even during the wars there were incidents in which Roman officials intervened to protect Jews from attacks from local opponents, who had taken advantage of the anti-Jewish sentiment evoked by the revolutions. (Meeks, 38)

Christians were viewed as more dangerous to society than Jews. Although Jews gained some converts and sympathizers (God fearers), Christians aggressively converted others. Jews also usually had some legal protections (for example, being exempt from sacrifices to pagan gods or

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the emperor), but once Christians were expelled from synagogues, they no longer benefitted from those protections and could more easily become targets of persecution. (Brown, 66)

A Jew, as a reward for some special service to the Roman army or administration, could even obtain the coveted *civitas Romana* without compromising his religious loyalty – as Paul's father did, if the report of Acts 22:28 is accurate. A couple of centuries later it was fairly common for Jews to hold citizenship and even municipal office in the cities of western Asia Minor. (Meeks, 14)

There has been no dearth of attempts to set Paul against the background of various kinds of Judaism. Now he appears as a "rabbi," again as a representative of "Jewish apocalyptic"; perhaps he stands closest to "Jewish mysticism," or even to "Jewish Gnosticism." Or his peculiar concerns are simply the result of his having been reared in a "Hellenistic Judaism." These categories do not add up to an adequate taxonomy of first-century Judaism. Paul himself is the clearest proof of their inadequacy. He writes in fluent Greek; his Bible is the Greek Septuagint; he is certainly a "Hellenistic Jew." He is convinced that the present, evil age is soon coming to an end; in the meantime he urges the children of light not to be like the children of darkness – surely this is "Jewish apocalyptic." He has been caught up into the third heaven and seen ineffable things – surely, if ever, one can speak of "Jewish mysticism" here? – yet he calls himself "in terms of the Law, a Pharisee." (Meeks, 33)

Sources who describe Judaism of the 1st Century:

Josephus (37– ca. 100 CE) was a young priestly aristocrat of Jerusalem who was charged with commanding Jewish troops in Galilee at the beginning of the 66– 70 war. His troops were defeated and he surrendered, ingratiating himself with Vespasian by predicting that the victorious general would be the next emperor. Josephus assisted Vespasian in the defeat of the Jews and returned with him to Rome where he was provided an apartment and generous pension that allowed him to write and publish. His works are in four categories:

The Jewish War, seven volumes written in Aramaic in the mid 70s CE, translated and published in Greek, covers the war in Palestine in great detail, concluding with the mass suicide at Masada in 74 and prefaced by an extended introduction beginning in Maccabean times (see fig. 13).

Jewish Antiquities, twenty volumes written in Greek (with scribal assistance) near the end of the first century CE, presents a history of the Jewish people from its origins until the eve of the revolt.

Life, an autobiographical work appended to the Antiquities, deals with the six months of Josephus's conduct just prior to and during the war.

Against Apion, Josephus's last work, is a defense of the Jews that responds to charges and misunderstandings.

(Boring, 85-86)

Philo was a well-educated, prominent member of the Jewish community in Alexandria. His native language and thought patterns were Greek, and his literary ambition was to interpret Judaism in Greek terms in a form attractive to the Hellenistic world. His writings are mostly

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detailed allegorical interpretations of the Pentateuch, including the Questions and Answers, the Allegorical Interpretations, and the Expositions. Among his important nonexegetical works are *That Every Good Person Is Free* (including a description of the Essenes), *On the Contemplative Life* (including a description of the Therapeutae), and his *Life of Moses*. While Philo is a representative of the intellectual elite, he must have been considered a good representative of Judaism by the large Jewish population of Alexandria, for he represented them in an embassy to the emperor Claudius to protest against the violation of their rights. (Boring, 86)

All the **rabbinic literature** was written down after the New Testament period, but it represents firm oral tradition, much of which was current in the first century CE.

Targumim. A Targum is an Aramaic paraphrase of the Hebrew text (see above § 4.3).

Midrashim. A midrash (pl. midrashim) is a commentary on the biblical text.

Mishnah. The oral tradition was edited and written down about 200 CE. Unlike the Midrashim, the Mishnah does not follow the order of the biblical text, but is a compilation of sixty-three Tractates arranged in six divisions: (1) Zeri, “Seeds,” dealing with agricultural laws, tithes, and the like; (2) Moed, “Set Feasts,” dealing with the Sabbath, the Passover, and other festivals and related matters; (3) Nashim, “Women,” dealing with domestic issues; (4) Nezikin, “Damages,” dealing with oaths, civil law, and related matters; an especially important unit of this section is Aboth or Avoth (The Fathers), distinct from all the rest in that it deals with the transmission and authority of the tradition itself, and the basic principles of the major rabbis; (5) Qodashim, “Hallowed Things,” providing regulations for offerings and cultic procedures; (6) Tohoroth, “Cleannesses,” dealing with matters of purification. The Mishnah represents the period of Tannaitic Judaism; “tannah” () is the Aramaic word for “repeat”— this is the period when the tradition was (orally) repeated; instruction and transmission was by repetition. (Boring, 91-92)

The Temple, High Priest, and King

There were many synagogues, but only one temple. Even though in modern times “temple” has sometimes been used as part of the name of a local synagogue, temple and synagogue were entirely distinct institutions. The first temple had been built by Solomon as the successor to the tabernacle (1 Kgs 5– 8). It endured from the tenth century BCE until its destruction by the Babylonians in 587 BCE. The second temple, begun in 520 and dedicated in 516 BCE, existed continuously until its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE. It was remodeled several times during these almost six centuries, but even the grandiose reconstruction by Herod the Great that in fact made it a new building was considered the continuation of the temple.

The temple was the center of economic and political life, especially of Jerusalem and Judea. Its treasury was the depository not only for the temple and national funds but for the assets of the wealthy, local and international. Rich depositors were naturally concerned for its stability. It was the largest employer in Judea. Under the supervision of Herod the Great, and then under the direction of the Romans, the high priests continued to exercise a leading political role, mediating between the Romans and the people at large. Although the high priest was supposed to be a lifetime appointment, the fact that Josephus can list twenty-eight

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different persons who held the office from the reign of Herod until the temple's destruction shows how politicized the office had become. The biblical model, in which the high priest's tenure was for life and then passed from father to son, was abolished by Herod, who appointed high priests at will, as did the Romans after him.

The hope for a future king included the hope for a restored and cleansed temple; the hope for an authentic temple and priesthood was inseparable from the hope for the coming of the true king, the Messiah.

In the temple the authorized priests carried out the rituals and sacrifices commanded by God through Moses. Daily sacrifices were offered for the people and, in Jesus' day, for (but not to!) the Roman emperor. Individuals brought their gifts and sacrifices to be dedicated to God. For some Jews, the present temple was defiled by an illegitimate priesthood. For many Jews, it was unthinkable that the temple could be destroyed. How could Judaism continue to exist if there were no temple? (Boring, 92-93)

The Synagogue

The temple was clearly grounded in the Bible and the ancient history of Israel. The synagogue originated in the postbiblical period, sometime after the destruction of the first temple, as a response to the Diaspora situation. Not only were there many synagogues; there were many kinds of synagogues, with a variety of social roles and settings, expressing the faith of Israel within different types of architecture and with a variety of rituals. Temple designated a building; synagogue means simply "gathering," "assembly," and only gradually assumed a somewhat uniform institutional type. Not all synagogues were alike, but represented various manifestations of worship gathering, school, and community center.

The synagogue was an informal noncultic institution, led by laymen and oriented around word and teaching. In contrast to temple Judaism, synagogue Judaism was a religion of the book. The synagogue clearly played a major role not only in promoting a knowledge of the Bible and Jewish tradition among the literate elite, but also in cultivating literacy among the common folk. Jesus and (some of?) his disciples, who did not belong to the literate upper classes, would probably have learned to read the Bible in Hebrew in the synagogue school. Jews who did not live in Jerusalem or its environs visited the temple only on major pilgrimage festivals, if at all. The local synagogue, on the other hand, was the center of community life, with regular services every Sabbath for worship and instruction.

During the New Testament period, the Roman government regarded the synagogue as belonging to the category of *collegia* and *thiasoi* of other national and religious groups, and extended formal protection to them as authorized associations. Jews were allowed the right of assembly, the right to administer their own finances, including the collection and transmission of the annual temple tax to Jerusalem, jurisdiction over and discipline of their own members, and freedom from military service and participation in the imperial cult. (Boring, 93)

Samaritans

Samaria is the hill country between Galilee in the north and Judea in the south. But just as Jews (= Judeans) came to mean those who belong to Jewish religion and/ or culture regardless of geography or ethnicity, so by New Testament times Samaritan could refer to a religious community centered in Samaria, but not confined to this region. They sometimes

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called themselves Jews/ Judeans, Hebrews (Josephus, Ant. 11.340– 44), or Israelites (Delos inscription, 150– 50 BCE). They had their own temple with its own cultus and priesthood, which they believed to be the only authentic temple of the ancestral and biblical God. They had their own version of the Scripture, the same five books of Moses used by Jerusalem Jews, but edited to show that the true temple is in Samaria. That the Samaritans considered only the Pentateuch to be Scripture suggests that the formation of the Samaritans as a separate community occurred when the “Jewish Bible” still consisted of only the five books of Moses. Like Jerusalem Judaism, they had a Diaspora, so that Samaritan communities could be found in such places as Rome, Thessalonica, and on the island of Delos.

After the exodus and the conquest of the promised land, Israel originally worshiped God in Samaria. When, under David and Solomon, the cult moved to Zion, this was, in Samaritan perspective, never YHWH’s intent. The true place of worship was thus a fundamental bone of contention between Samaritans and Jews (see John 4: 20). The Samaritans considered themselves to be the remnants of the old, pre-Davidic kingdom of Israel. Many ancient Jews considered the Samaritans to be the descendants of the foreign settlers the Assyrians had relocated after they had destroyed and depopulated Samaria in 721 BCE. The antipathy and suspicion between Jews and Samaritans was, of course, the necessary background for understanding Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25– 37). (Boring, 95)

Hellenists and Hellenistic Jews

There is a sense in which most Jews in the first century CE, whether in the Diaspora or Palestine, could be described as Hellenistic Jews, that is, participating to some extent in what had become the international culture of the Mediterranean. Just as “Americanization” became a global influence after World War II, affecting even those who opposed it and advocated loyalty to the ancestral ways, so Palestine was to some extent Hellenized, and the older rigid distinction between “Palestinian” and “Hellenistic” Judaism can no longer be maintained. Nonetheless, within Palestine there were some who resisted and some who continued to be more open to the wider world of Hellenizing influences, due to cultural momentum or to the personal conviction that the way forward for Judaism was to come to terms with the dominant culture and politics.

Though they apparently formed no organized party, some Jews were specifically identified as Hellenists (Acts 6: 1; 9: 29; 11: 20). These were evidently Jewish people in Palestine whose first language was Greek, who did not understand the local Aramaic, and who lived in the Greek style. They were apparently Diaspora Jews who had moved or returned to Judea to be near the sacred city, to retire, die, and be buried there. One might compare them to English-speaking Jews of our own time who move to Israel for religious reasons. Such Jews tended to live in their own enclaves, to continue to speak Greek, and to have their own synagogues, even in Jerusalem, in the shadow of the temple (Acts 6: 1, 9; a Greek inscription belonging to a synagogue has been found in Jerusalem). They were called Hellenists, “Greek speakers,” in contrast to the native Judean population whose mother tongue was Aramaic. There was continuing tension between the Greek-speaking Hellenists and local Aramaic-speaking Jews. (Boring, 95-96)

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Essenes and Qumran

Though not mentioned in the New Testament, the specific group known as Essenes is documented in Josephus, who treats it at greater length than any of the other Jewish “philosophical schools of thought” he catalogues, and in Philo. In protest against what they regarded as the illegitimate Hasmonean priesthood that had assumed control of the temple, its cultus, and its calendar, about 150 BCE a group withdrew and, after a period of indecision, founded a community at Qumran. They considered their own community the provisional true temple of the interim period and awaited the eschatological restoration of the true temple in which they would be the authorized priests. In the meantime, they conducted their own life according to the laws of temple purity and their alternative calendar for the festivals. They had two meals in common every day, preceded by a ritual bath and conducted in a state of ritual purity. They had no slaves, renounced private property, and lived simple, austere lives devoted to a rigid schedule of Bible study. The Qumran contingent of Essenes was only a small minority of the whole sect. The majority of the Essenes— Josephus says they numbered about four thousand— apparently lived in enclaves throughout the land, some or all of them permitting marriage and living among the population, but not participating in its common life. The Jerusalem priests considered them heretics and sometimes persecuted them. When the Romans approached in 68 CE, the Qumran Covenanters carefully sealed their scrolls in large pottery containers and hid them in the nearby caves, where they remained until accidentally discovered in 1947. We know these texts as the Dead Sea Scrolls. (Boring, 96-97)

Sectarian Baptizing Movements

The movement begun by John the Baptist is rightly seen within the context of a series of renewal movements within Judaism that came into being after the Roman takeover in Palestine. Yet John and his movement appear to have had distinctive importance. Of apocalyptic baptizing preachers, only he is mentioned in Josephus, and only he directly affected Jesus, early Christianity, and the New Testament. He calls Israel to see themselves not as “already there,” but in prospect, needing to go into the Jordan again by being baptized. His baptism thus functions like proselyte baptism, though it was not based on it. Proselytes baptized themselves; John was the first to baptize others (hence the title). The Jewish practice of baptizing proselytes is clearly documented only after John’s time. Yet the symbolism is similar: empirical Israel is not yet the true Israel and, like the Gentiles, needs to make a fresh entrance into the land and be incorporated into the true, renewed covenant people ready to meet their God. (Boring, 98)

Zealots, Sicarii, and other Revolutionaries

Though the term Zealot can be properly applied only to one of the military groups in the latter days of the 66– 70 revolt, it has become a general, though inaccurate, term for the variety of resistance movements in Palestine from the time of the imposition of direct Roman rule in Judea in 6 CE to the catastrophic war of 66– 70 CE. These groups shared the common goal of overthrowing Roman rule, but the movements were never united under a single name, leader, program, or theology, and often fought with each other and their fellow Jews who favored cooperation with the Romans.

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Apocalypticism flavored much of the movement. Like the Covenanters of Qumran, they could hardly have thought that their own little armed bands could defeat the Roman legions, but acted on the conviction that if they were faithful to the covenant, God would intervene and establish the promised eschatological kingdom. The leaders of some of the groups saw themselves as messianic figures. It is in this context that Jesus' and early Christianity's talk of messiahship and kingdom of God must be understood, both in comparison and contrast. (Boring, 99)

Sadducees

The Sadducees seem to have emerged as a distinct group in Maccabean times by remaining identified with the priesthood of the Jerusalem Temple when others were turned away. The Sadducees became increasingly identified with the ruling Hellenized aristocracy, supposedly having little in common with the people. (Brown, 76)

The Sadducees are the most difficult of the groups to describe. We have no texts in which the author identifies himself as a Sadducee, no source explicitly composed from a Sadducean point of view, no post-70 CE group that claims to be the heirs of the Sadducees. They are mentioned in the Gospels, Josephus, and rabbinic literature— all hostile sources. In the Gospels, they are the priestly opponents of Jesus, instrumental in his death. Josephus portrays them as not believing in “fate,” that is, divine providence, but emphasizing human responsibility, and as rejecting the doctrines of immortality, resurrection, and postmortem rewards and punishments. They are wealthy, have a following among the wealthy elite rather than the common people, and (sometimes) belong to the ruling elite themselves, but are constrained to rule in accord with the dominant doctrine of the Pharisees. In their conduct with each other, they are somewhat boorish (war. 2.119– 66; Ant. 13.173; 18.16– 17). In later rabbinic Judaism, the Sadducees get a bad press; they are regarded as heretics and hardly belonging to Judaism. The etymology of the name is disputed, but it is most likely related to Zadok (Sadducee = Zadokite), who established what became the line of authentic priests in the time of Solomon (1 Kgs 1: 8, 34, 38– 39). In first-century Judaism, the Sadducean group would thus have represented the priestly party of the Jerusalem temple, understanding themselves to be the authentic priests in the Hasmonean line.

Some characteristics of Sadducees

—Cooperation with the Romans, implementing and sharing their rule. In any colonial or imperial political structure, the ruling power needs local leaders who can maintain the law and order necessary for collection of taxes. Some of the local leadership will see that this is for the good of all and will cooperate. One way of doing this is to restrict “politics” to one area of life and “religion” to another, which allows cooperation in the “secular” realm while maintaining purity in the “religious” realm.

—Accepting only the Pentateuch as “canonical.” There was no fixed canon accepted by all Jews during the first century CE. It has often been assumed that the Sadducees accepted only the five books of Moses as canonical, while Pharisees accepted the later prophetic and apocalyptic books. It seems to be clear that some first-century Jews regarded only the Pentateuch/ Torah as sacred Scripture and others affirmed a more extensive “canon,” but there is no clear evidence identifying the Sadducees with the former and the Pharisees with the

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latter. The important point here is that it was in fact the later prophetic and apocalyptic books that provided pictures of a coming eschatological kingdom, resistance to earthly empires, and resurrection of the dead. Such books could fuel the fires of political rebellion and were resisted by Jewish groups that saw the way forward for God's people in terms of submission and cooperation rather than rebellion.

—Rejection of the oral tradition of the Pharisees. The oral tradition of the Pharisees attempted to bring the whole of life under the sway of the divine revelation at Sinai (see below). Some of those who rejected the Pharisees' oral traditions may have wanted to find a "secular" sphere for which the revealed truth of the Torah gave no specific directions, thus allowing cooperation with the Romans without violating the Bible.
(Boring, 100-101)

Pharisees

The Pharisees are the Jewish group most frequently mentioned in the New Testament, the group that apparently had the most influence on Jesus, early Christianity, and the New Testament. According to Josephus, the Pharisees first emerge on the historical stage in the time of the Hasmonean king John Hyrcanus (134– 104 BCE). They had no political power of their own but as members of the retainer class were influential in shaping the policies of the king. They lost his support, and his son Alexander Janneus had many of them put to death because of their political intrigues. Alexandra, his widow and successor, restored the Pharisees to political power, so that they became the real power behind the throne. By the first century CE, the New Testament depicts the Pharisees no longer as a political interest group (though see their collaboration with the Herodians, Mark 3: 6; 12: 13).

There are three points on which there is widespread agreement:

1. The Pharisees represented a centrist, lay movement respected by broad streams of the population. They were highly respected, the "leading school" (war. 2.162) that "have the masses on their side" (Ant. 13.288).
2. The Pharisees were lay advocates of the holiness of the whole people of God in every aspect of its life. Although priests could be Pharisees, the Pharisees were basically a lay movement. As the temple was the realm of the priests, the synagogue was the domain of the Pharisees' activity— though there is no evidence that they were in charge of it. They elaborated rules that covered every aspect of personal and social life, with the intent of specifying how Israel could be a holy people whose every move was in conformity to the revelation of God at Sinai.
3. The Pharisees were champions of oral tradition as the means of this sanctification. A key Mishnah text Aboth (also transliterated Avoth, "the Fathers") begins: "Moses received the Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue." The tractate proceeds by naming sixty teachers of the law who lived between 60 BCE and 200 CE, the time when the oral tradition contained in the Mishnah was written down. The list includes only one priest, Simeon the Just. The point: the authentic tradition has been handed down by the lay teachers, not the priests. The means of transmission was oral tradition.

(Boring, 101-102)

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Relations among these groups were at times vicious. This helps us to understand the religious enmity we find in the NT. An unnamed high priest sought the death of the Qumran Teacher of Righteousness. In 128 BC the sanctuary of the Samaritans on Mt Gerizim was destroyed by the high priest John Hyrcanus. A few decades later Alexander Jannaeus had 6,000 Jews massacred at the feast of the Tabernacles over a challenge (by Pharisees?) to his legal qualifications to hold the priestly office. Later he crucified 800 (seemingly including Pharisees) while their wives and children were butchered before their eyes. On the other hand, Pharisees incited hatred among the masses against both Jannaeus and Hyrcanus. All these incidents took place before the time of Herod the Great and the Roman prefecture in Judea (and thus before Jesus' lifetime), perhaps because these strong rulers would not tolerate such fighting among religious sects, but we can imagine the conflicts and feelings between the parties lingered on. (Brown 78)

Apocalyptic and Messianic Hope

In Second Temple Judaism, during the time of Jesus, the beginnings of the church, and the formation of the New Testament, apocalyptic eschatology was a vigorous element in broad streams of Jewish life and theology. After the catastrophic failure of the two revolts against Rome, the Jamnian scribes and their rabbinic successors turned away from apocalyptic visions that had contributed to the revolutionary fervor, with the result that the apocalypses, Jewish and Christian, were preserved by Christians. Christians sometimes expanded and modified the Jewish apocalypses, giving them a Christian orientation and interpretation (e.g., 4 Ezra). Apocalyptic tradition is not marginal in the New Testament, but pervasive. (Boring, 105)

Apocalypticism typically had the following characteristics:

1. Crisis literature. Apocalyptic literature is often described as generated by and emerging from crisis situations. It is true that some apocalypses, such as Daniel and Revelation, were written in times of persecution and political turmoil, but it is by no means true that all apocalyptic literature was composed by the persecuted and oppressed. There is a sense, however, in which all apocalyptic writings reflect a crisis situation—theological at least, and in many cases political and social.
2. Universal, cosmic scope. The apocalyptic writers looked beyond the covenant history of Israel to universal history. They were concerned not only with Israel's future, but with the goal and end of all things. Thus several apocalyptic writings are attributed to universally human figures such as Adam and Enoch, who lived prior to Abraham, Moses, and the covenant history of Israel. The writers set their current crises within the context of a universal, cosmic story.
3. Divine intervention to bring this world to a worthy conclusion. The apocalyptic thinkers emphasized discontinuity with the present, rather than continuity. God's salvation will come at the end of history, not by gradual growth from within history, but by a cataclysmic intervention from beyond this world. This cosmic drama need not mean the destruction of the present cosmos, nor does it imply that the change would be instantaneous; in Jewish apocalyptic thought the coming end typically means the radical transformation of this world, which occurs in the final period of history. Jewish apocalyptic thought is not typically "otherworldly" in the sense that it disdains the

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present world and seeks escape into some other world. This is Gnosticism, not apocalyptic theology. Gnosticism is world-denying, but apocalyptic thought is world-affirming. It is precisely because Jewish apocalyptic thinkers affirmed this world as God's good creation that they held on to their faith that God would redeem the world, though they saw no way that God's salvation could occur by developments within this world.

4. The imminent end. For most apocalyptic thought, the projected end was to come soon, as the solution to the troubles experienced in the present. The nearness of the end was encouragement to persevere, not abstract calculation.
5. Angels. Earlier Israelite thought already had the concept of angels, but in apocalypticism angels become more numerous, receive names and ranks, and exercise key functions in the divine administration of the universe. Earthly institutions have heavenly, angelic counterparts. God does not act so directly as in earlier Israelite thought, but works through angelic intermediaries.
6. Demons and Satan. Earlier Israelite thought had little place for evil spirits and demons. God the creator was in charge of the whole cosmos and ultimately responsible for everything in it, including evil. Without abandoning its core faith in the one God, Second Temple Judaism began to attribute evil to secondary demonic powers who were still ultimately under God's sovereignty.
7. Dualism. There is a kind of dualism characteristic of apocalypticism, a dualism that thinks in terms of this world and the beyond, in both spatial and chronological terms. The heavenly world stands in contrast to this evil material world. This evil age stands in contrast to the world to come.
8. Pseudonymous authorship. No Jewish apocalypse was written in the author's own name. Each was attributed to some venerated ancient figure. All were presented as written in the time of Ezra or before, since it was often assumed that prophetic revelation came to an end in the time of Ezra. Enoch and Elijah, both of whom were taken to the heavenly world without dying, were favorite authors, since they could communicate the heavenly realities by direct experience.
9. Prewritten history. The real author of an apocalyptic text has a message for his own time, but in the apocalyptic framework this had to be presented as the "prophecy" of the postulated author, who "predicts" the history from the time of the postulated author to the real author's own time. The retrospective view of the real author and his own historical locus becomes clear at the point where he ceases to look backward and report events with relative accuracy, and begins to look forward and predict his own actual future, at which point his predictions become vague or erroneous.
10. Symbolic language. It is universally recognized that the transcendent realities about which the apocalyptic writers speak cannot be expressed in the conventional language of literalism. The visionary apocalyptists refined and developed a kind of metaphoric, mythical, symbolic language already at home in Israel's biblical and theological tradition.

(Boring, 105-108)

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Apocalyptic and Empire

Daniel proclaims that the will of God is to deliver humanity from such oppression and set people free for the kind of life the Creator wills for them (σωτηρία *sōtēria*, salvation; ζωή *zōē*, life). Daniel's visions portray the march of human empire from Babylon through Persia to Alexander and his Greek successors, and promise that God's own empire will soon smash the earthly empires and establish God's justice (Dan 2, 7). This did not happen, but the failure of God's kingdom to appear in history did not destroy the faith expressed in this theology. When the Roman Empire succeeded the Greeks, Jewish apocalyptic teachers reconfigured the imagery so that Rome was the final earthly empire, soon to be replaced by God's empire.

In the apocalyptic thought of the New Testament, the conflicts between the people of God and earthly powers are the concrete foreground conflicts representing the ultimate conflict between God and Satan. There is a fundamental conflict between the values and way of life embodied in Jesus and his disciples and the values and way of life represented by this-worldly empire. But the this-worldly enemy is not the ultimate enemy. Just as the followers of Jesus or the church is not the kingdom of God, so the Roman Empire is not the kingdom of Satan.

The confession that Jesus is the definitive revelation of the character of God means that the apocalyptic act of God that finally over-throws evil and establishes God's justice, though expressed in the language and imagery of imperial violence, is not merely the replacement of earthly imperial violent power with heavenly imperial violence. The use of such language and imagery is ironic and inescapable—the only language and conceptuality we have to express God's acts is this-worldly language and conceptuality. To speak of “winning” and “conquering,” even of “ruling,” inevitably brings with it the connotations of earthly rule and power. Yet the early Christians believed that the definitive revelation of God in Jesus means that the ultimate power of the universe is self-giving love as manifest in the life and death of Jesus, and that this power shall ultimately prevail. To say Jesus is the Christ does not merely identify Jesus in terms of traditional (violent!) imagery, but redefines “Christ” in terms of who Jesus actually was. (Boring, 108-109)

Varieties of the Messianic Hope

Many Jews, perhaps most, expressed their hopes for the ultimate fulfillment of God's purposes for Israel and the world without reference to a Messiah. Most Jewish religious texts, ancient and modern, including those oriented to the future, have nothing to say about a specific messianic figure. Later rabbinic writings in the Talmud make relatively frequent reference to the Messiah, but the whole corpus of the Mishnah, which includes practically all the traditions from the first century CE and earlier, has only two such references. The view that the messianic hope was an essential element in all first-century Judaism, in which Jews universally cherished the hope of a future Messiah, is a stereotype created by later Christians.

In the days of Jesus and early Christianity, many Jews would have expressed their faith in a way that included a climactic future act of God involving a savior figure sent and empowered by God. The very early Christian formulation of the question of John the Baptist, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we wait for another?” (Matt 11: 3// Luke 7: 19, a Q text), would have been meaningful to many first-century Jews. Yet, among Jews who hoped for

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such a future divinely sent deliverer, there was much variety in how they conceptualized and articulated this hope.

Christ. The Hebrew word (transliterated *mashiach*, Anglicized as *Messiah*) is an adjective derived from the verbal root (*mashach*, anoint), with a passive meaning, *anointed*. Anointing with oil was part of the inauguration ritual for kings (e.g., 1 Sam 10: 1; 16: 13; Ps 2: 2; 18: 50), for priests (e.g., Exod 30: 30– 31; 40: 15; Lev 4: 3, 5; 2 Macc 1: 10), and for prophets (e.g., 1 Kgs. 19: 16; Isa 61: 1; Ps 105: 15). The passive form and meaning is theologically important. To designate someone *Messiah/ Christ/ Anointed One* does not claim they are something extraordinary in and of themselves, but that they have been anointed by God. In the world of 1st Century Judaism, to confess that Jesus is the Christ is not a claim about Jesus' power, but about the fact that God has chosen, authorized, and empowered Jesus.

Messianic King. The messianic hope continued to be expressed as the hope for a future king. Such hopes were subversive of the present ruler. For anyone to claim, or have others claim for him, that he was the divinely appointed king of the endtime was a call to revolution against the current government. Such claims were dealt with harshly.

Son of David. The eschatological king was often considered to be a descendant of David, a rightful heir of the original David who had freed Israel from its enemies and brought peace and prosperity. This hope is classically expressed in Psalms of Solomon 17: 21– 32, written about 50 BCE after the Roman takeover of Judea. The Messiah through whom this will be accomplished is a human being, chosen and empowered by God to establish God's just rule for all peoples, with Israel at the center. Psalms of Solomon 17 is also important in that, in addition to *Messiah*, it uses two other terms that were to become central in New Testament Christology. The term "Lord" (*κύριος* *kyrios*, also transliterated *kyrios*) is used for the Messiah (v. 32), and the term "son(s) of God" appears— but for faithful Israel of the messianic times, not of the Messiah himself (v. 27).

Son of God. Second Temple Judaism did occasionally refer to the coming Messiah as *Son of God*. This is in continuity with the biblical (not pagan) understanding of the term. In the Bible's extensive use of the language of sonship, it is important to bear in mind the usage of the term "son" in Hebrew (and other Semitic languages). In addition to the primary English meaning of the word "son," that is, male biological offspring, the Hebrew noun (*ben*) is used in a number of ways alien to English usage. One of the most important and most common usages of "son" in Hebrew is with the cluster of meanings, "belonging to a category," or "having the characteristics or quality of."

Prophet. Moses, the original savior figure of Israel, had promised that after his death God would raise up a "prophet like Moses" as Israel's guide (Deut 18: 15– 18). After the exile, Second Temple Judaism sometimes pictured the expected future deliverer as a prophetic figure, the "eschatological prophet," who would be the divinely authorized spokesperson for the last days. A variation of this hope is the expectation that Elijah would return just before the end to prepare the way. This view was based on Malachi 3: 1– 2; 4: 5– 6 and reinforced by the story that Elijah did not die but was taken bodily to heaven (2 Kgs 2: 11). In the Old Testament and Jewish hope, however, Elijah is not the Messiah, nor does he prepare the way for the Messiah, but he is the final prophet before the advent of the Lord God.

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Son of Man. Some streams of Second Temple Judaism expressed their hopes for the future in terms of an apocalyptic figure called the Son of Man who would come from heaven to establish God's kingdom, raise the dead, and be instrumental in the Last Judgment. The New Testament Gospels use this term as the most common designation for Jesus, where it occurs eighty-two times, always as Jesus' own self-designation.

(Boring, 109-113)

Jewish Revolt of 66-70

For Palestinian and diaspora Jews alike, the destruction of the temple and the holy city in the revolt of 66–70 was the great turning point in their religious and personal history. Second Temple Judaism comes to an end, and the development of rabbinic Judaism begins. Jesus, earliest Jerusalem Christianity, and Paul lived prior to this transition; most of the New Testament was written during or after it. The war was a watershed event, marking the beginning of the “parting of the ways” that resulted in Judaism and Christianity becoming two separate religions. (Boring, 114)

Canonical Decisions

During the last days of the war, Johanan ben Zakkai, a leading teacher among the Pharisees, escaped the doomed city and, with Roman permission, established an academy for study of the Torah at Jamnia (Jabneh, Yavneh) near modern Tel Aviv. It has sometimes been supposed that the canon of the Hebrew Bible was “established” at Jamnia, and while the teachers at Jamnia used a central core of texts, neither Josephus nor any other first-century Jew used the word “canon.” However, by about 100 CE, Josephus could assume it as commonly accepted that the Jewish Scriptures contained the same twenty-two books as at present. These twenty-two books of the Hebrew Bible, differently divided and arranged, are the thirty-nine books of the Christian Old Testament. (Boring, 116)

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