

Excerpt from Emilio G. Chávez, “A Theological Introduction to the Christian Bible,” unpublished manuscript, class notes for a Master’s degree/seminary program

Chapter Six:

The Book of Daniel, Jewish Apocalyptic, and the Intertestamental Period As the Background for Understanding Christian Origins

Historical introduction. The second century B.C.E. (beginning in 199) is a very important period for Judaism.¹²⁰ Many of the hopes held by the nation had not been fulfilled. The Persian empire, who had permitted their return (or, at least, the return of those most patriotic and religious among the exiles: these were the ones who returned to the devastated Land), but who had ruled over them through a priestly theocracy who left much to be desired (at least in the opinion of certain groups, including those whom we have termed “dissidents,” reflected in Third Isaiah, Jonah, etc.), were succeeded by the Greeks in 333 B.C.E. After the untimely death of the rather noble Alexander the Great in 323, his vast empire was divided up into four regions, headed by the *Diadochi* (“successors”), his former generals. Most relevant for our Jewish people were the rulers of Egypt, the Lagids or Ptolemies (whence the various Cleopatras would come from), and, to the north, in Syria, the Seleucids. A prominent name for the rulers of this kingdom was Antiochus, and thus several cities were called by this name, including the prominent one in the early Church, where we were first called “Christians,” Acts 11:26.

The history of this period is fascinating and complex, but we will get to the points that are important for our purposes.¹²¹ If messianic hopes had been nurtured from the time of Haggai in the early postexilic period (around 520), the desperate situation came to a head with the coming to power of the Syrian king Antiochus IV, dubbed “Epiphanes” (as in Epiphany, or manifestation of the divine); he was so cruel some punningly nicknamed him Epimanes, or madman. His desire was that all his subjects be thoroughly Hellenized, that is, good Greeks.¹²² Greek culture, of course, had been spread by the great Alexander, himself tutored by Aristotle. This was a great culture of art, politics (democracy is a Greek word!) and philosophy (another Greek word!). The center of Greek life was the polis (city, whence “politics”), and the center of the polis was the

¹²⁰ In fact, control of Judea switched from that of the more benign Ptolemies to that of the ultimately disastrous Seleucids around 199 B.C.E.

¹²¹ The main source is JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Books XII-XV.

¹²² Not unlike the purpose of the Inquisition, by the way: national unity via religious uniformity.

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gymnasium (from the Greek word for “naked”), where sports were played along with other civic activities. Jewish culture had adopted many features of the Greek world. In the great city of Alexandria, Egypt, Jews had stopped using Hebrew, and this is why the Septuagint had been composed beginning in the third century B.C.E. In the second century, Jesus ben Sira’s grandson had translated “Ecclesiasticus” into Greek (complaining along the way that this was not such an adequate language in which to render the potent Hebrew). But for devout Jews —I think we can call them *hasidic*, “pious,” despite objections being raised by scholars— such acceptance of Greek ways and such commingling of customs was a recipe for blurring identities and watering down Torah-observance. To begin with, the very sign of the covenant, circumcision, was under attack: it was considered a horrible mutilation by the Greeks, and painfully evident in the gymnasium! So Jews who wanted to blend in tried to disguise it; see 1 Macc 1:14-15 (at the beginning of this book!); 2 Macc 4:7-17.

But soon it became much more than simply “blending in.” Antiochus IV actually forbade the practice of Judaism, prohibiting under penalty of death circumcision and all Sabbath and festival observance, and forcing Jews to eat pork. This occurred in 167; Antiochus had already plundered the Temple in 169. Worst of all, he desecrated the altar and set up an altar to Zeus Olympios. On 25 Kislev 167 B.C.E., a pig was sacrificed on it; see 1 Macc 1:54 (verse numbers differ among the Bible versions). This is what was literally called the “abomination of the desolation” in Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11.¹²³ “Abomination” was a classic word for idol, something Yahweh and all good Jews detested; see, e.g., Jer 7:30. “Desolation” indicates how appalled, astonished, speechless, a pious person became after having witnessed such a sacrilege.¹²⁴ This was a moment when a Jew had to decide whether to abandon the ancestral faith and loyalty to Yahweh, the God of the Fathers and of the Exodus, or assimilate to Greek, pagan, ways, as many Jews in fact did. We owe Jesus Christ and our Christian faith to the fidelity and heroism to the point of enduring torture and martyrdom of these faithful Jews, the victims of the first *pogrom*, the first attempt to wipe out Jews and with them, Judaism (but, alas, only the *first* such attempt).

¹²³ Jesus used the expression in Mark 13:14.

¹²⁴ The combination of “abomination” and “desolation” may stem from combining Jer 7:30 and 7:34 (“because the Land shall become a waste (ruin or desolation);” cf. Jer 44:22.

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This is when the Maccabees rose up, a priestly family from Modein (but probably not Zadokites; 1 Macc 2:1 may be an insertion or change in the text to support the fact that the Maccabean dynasty did assume the high priesthood).¹²⁵ At this time, “mighty warriors” called “Hasideans” (the text is in Greek), which some consider to be the Greek version of Hasidim (“pious Jews;” these Hasideans were quite observant of Torah, 1 Macc 2:42) joined the guerrilla war against the Seleucid Syrians.¹²⁶ The prowess of the small number of Jews against a much larger enemy was comparable to that of modern day Jews when they were immediately attacked by all their Arab neighbors upon declaring independence in 1948. The Maccabees were successful, and exactly three years later, on 25 Kislev 164, they were able to rededicate the cleansed Temple. The feast of its renewal or rededication is Hanukkah (it fell on the same day as Christmas in 2005).

We will limit ourselves in the discussion of this convoluted period to what is of most interest for understanding Christian origins. First, we should stress the pluralism that prevailed in Judaism until the destruction of the second temple in 70 C.E., when Judaism regrouped under the rabbis and consolidated itself along the lines of Pharisaic halakah, that is, the Pharisaic interpretation of Torah. This Pharisaic-rabbinic predominance would exercise a control over orthodoxy similar to what the nascent Catholic Church would do as heresies of various sorts emerged in the first and especially second centuries.

Note that in the time of Jesus, in the New Testament, we hear of Pharisees and Sadducees, and perhaps even of “Zealots” (Luke 6:13; Acts 1:13?; the “robbers, bandits” of Mark 15:27; John 18:40 describes Barabbas with the same term which Josephus uses for the insurgents whom we call the “Zealots”). These were three of the four sects or “philosophies” that Josephus writes about, the other one being the Essenes. We have seen that in the Maccabean war some “Hasideans” joined the struggle, and this term refers to

¹²⁵ See LEONARD J. GREENSPOON, “Between Alexandria and Antioch. Jews and Judaism in the Hellenistic Period,” in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World* (M.D. Coogan, ed.; Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 327.

¹²⁶ In 1 Macc 7:13, the Hasideans are the first to seek peace; in 2 Macc 14:6, Judas Maccabee is said to be one of them and a warmonger. In the Old Testament, we have not only the precedent of Holy War, with Yahweh the man-of-war leading it, but that of the consecrated Nazirites, who may be behind the text of Judg 5:2 (see the *Bible de Jérusalem* note), and perhaps also, as a few think, that of the Rechabites (Jer 35; see 2 Kgs 10:15-28). An early reference to “pious (or devout)” Jews in the “hasidic” sense is found in Isa 57:1, literally “men of *hesed*.”

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pious Jews who were very observant of the Torah. Many used to speak of them as the Hasidim, which gave rise to the Pharisees, the Essenes and the circles from which Jesus came. We could add the “Daniel group.” Today this is quite disputed and often considered an oversimplification. But what is clear is that Judaism was divided into opposing factions at the time of the Maccabean uprising. To begin with, there were the assimilationist Jews, who adopted Greek ways to one extent or another (many to the point of apostasy), and other Jews who took the Torah much more seriously.

To wrap up our brief historical overview, we know that the Maccabees were victorious in 164 B.C.E, and that this ushered in a period of some one hundred years of independence (or relative independence) for the Jewish nation (it would not be so again until 1948). We can consider the end of this relatively free period to be 63 B.C.E, when the Roman armies under Pompey begin the period of Roman occupation. Within this period of “independence,” the Jews were able to expand their territory. Noteworthy is the conquest of their classic archenemy Edom (by John Hyrcanus, in 129 B.C.E.) and the destruction of the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim (also by John Hyrcanus, and now dated to 111/110 B.C.E.).¹²⁷

The Maccabees had created a dynasty, known as the Hasmonean dynasty after one of their ancestors (mentioned by Josephus). As happens with many revolutionary groups which topple a corrupt government and then take over, the new rulers were likewise soon corrupted. At least, this was the view of many in Israel. Chief among the problems was the assumption of the high priesthood by Jonathan Maccabee in 152. For many scholars, this was a major factor in the creation of opposing factions, including the Essenes. In addition, there were serious disputes as to how to interpret and apply Torah. One of the sons of John Hyrcanus, mentioned above, Alexander Janneus, may have been the first Hasmonean to adopt the title “king,” which we have seen was problematic for many. He was also high priest, and aroused opposition; thousands of Jews were killed at his orders, and he crucified hundreds of Jews who had been his former comrades.¹²⁸ Most of these are thought to have been Pharisees.

¹²⁷ See *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 496. Recall that we said that the Herods were Idumeans, “Edomites,” from this ethnic group forcibly converted by the Jews; *ibid.*, 627. On Samaritan worship in Mt. Gerizim, see John 4:20.

¹²⁸ See GREENSPOON, “Between Alexandria and Antioch,” 337-338.

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At this time (around 100 B.C.E.), we see the Pharisees as a party wanting to maintain faithfulness to the Torah according to their interpretation (or *halakah*, meaning ‘way in which one should walk’). They seek influence in national life, and are a reform group with democratic ideals (they want to extend priestly purity regulations to all Israel). They are creative in their theological and scriptural views, are learned, adapt divine Law to changing circumstances. They are not conservative, like the Sadducees, who believe only in written Torah, but not in the Prophets, or angels, or resurrection. Like Roman Catholics and others, Pharisees believe in Tradition, stemming from an oral Torah that God delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, and which was transmitted mouth to mouth in a chain of authorities until the present day (actually, most or all of this oral Torah was finally written down in the Talmud probably by the sixth century C.E., in Babylon!).¹²⁹ The fortunes of the Pharisees fared better after Alexander Janneus, their former crucifier, on his deathbed “summoned his wife Alexandra and pleaded with her to listen to the Pharisees.”¹³⁰ We now have a little background to understand the disputes between Jesus and this reform party seeking influence (which they finally obtained, since they are largely responsible for Judaism having the shape that it has to this day —and surviving all that it has!).

Another party which we must briefly look now at are the Essenes. We will have to say more about them later, in regards to Jewish apocalyptic and the intertestamental period. But now, to conclude this historical overview, we want to illustrate the divisions that existed in this pluralistic Jewish world, divisions which arose largely because of the devout faith of “dissidents” who opposed what they viewed as corruption in religious affairs (religion normally cannot be separated from politics, and back then this was inconceivable). The Essenes are interesting for many reasons, but, to begin with, because

¹²⁹ In an addition to the Mishna, the first codification of rabbinic law ca. 200 C.E. (the Mishna plus the commentary known as Gemara constitutes the Talmud), known as the “Sayings of the Fathers” (*Pirke Avot*), it says: “Moses received the Torah [both oral and written] on Sinai, and handed it down to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it down to the Men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment; raise up many disciples; and make a fence round the Torah;” JOSEPH H. HERTZ, *Sayings of the Fathers* (New York: Behrman House, 1945), 13-15. I thank Rabbi Donald Crain for the gift of this book. From the Men of the Great Assembly (in Hebrew, *k^eneset*), the oral Torah was transmitted by pairs (“yokes”) of rabbis down to the time of the Talmuds (Palestinian, ca. 400 C.E., Babylonian, ca. 500 C.E.).

¹³⁰ GREENSPOON, “Between Alexandria and Antioch,” 339. He feared that his lack of popularity was due to having opposed them (an indication of the esteem in which many or most Jews held the Pharisees).

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they physically separated themselves from national life and retreated to the desert, in a voluntary Exile as “penitents” or “converts,” awaiting the time when the Exile would end and they could *return* (remember that this verb in Hebrew can also mean “to do penance, convert”).

There is a huge amount of study and writing regarding the Essenes. Most scholars view the community that has given us the Dead Sea Scrolls as Essene (more about the importance of these scrolls later). Some distinguish between a more generalized Essene movement and a stricter, more “monastic” and even celibate branch which settled in Qumran, the site where the scrolls were found (on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea). Most scholars date the rift in Judaism which led to the separation of this group known as Essenes to about the middle of the second century B.C.E. (i.e., *ca.* 150). The Essenes were of the Zadokite line, legitimate priests, as the Hasmoneans were not. Further, there were bitter disputes about Torah and how to apply it, and even disputes about the religious calendar. The Essenes used an ancient (probably priestly) solar calendar, while Jews had adopted the Babylonian lunar calendar. The importance of this cannot be exaggerated. Proper observance of feasts and sacrifices was crucial, and different calendars led to certain days being either the right ones or not in which to worship God (note the quartodecimal dispute in Christianity regarding the date of Easter). The calendar was of immense importance for many devout Jews, and it may be that discrepancies as to what day Jesus celebrated his last Passover Seder according to the Gospels (the Synoptics and John apparently being at odds) may be resolved by positing that Jesus and his followers used a non-official calendar much like the Essenes had their own calendar.¹³¹

The Book of Daniel. We now come to a work that is extremely significant. It is the latest work of the Hebrew Bible, and is in fact not written in Hebrew (!), but Aramaic, the language which prevailed after the Babylonian Exile in everyday life. The sacred language, of course, was Hebrew, and I adhere to the view that the beginning and end of Dan were translated into Hebrew in order to kosherize this book for inclusion among the

¹³¹ The great scholar of the Jewish calendar was Annie Jaubert. She is not always convincing, but certainly thought-provoking. Her work has importance for the chronology of Jesus’ last days. The great pseudepigraphal (“intertestamental”) book defending the solar calendar is “Jubilees,” and it was very important at Qumran.

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holy books.¹³² We have seen that the book had its problems being accepted. It is in fact full-blown apocalyptic, and even contains quite precise predictions of when the time of the End will come. The Writings were not “canonized” until probably 100 C.E. By that time, Dan had made it, due to its reputation, use and popularity, but apocalyptic works in general were frowned upon by the cautious Jewish leadership. These works had fed the wild hopes of the insurgents in several Jewish uprisings, notably the war against the Romans from 66 to 73 C.E. (Masada), which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and of the second Temple in 70. There were other uprisings around 115, and a second great revolt (under the messianic Bar Kochba, the “son of the star” of Num 24:17, whence the “star of Bethlehem” of Matt 2:2) in 132-135, which resulted in the Romans turning Jerusalem into a pagan city from which Jews were barred. So the wise and prudent rabbis had good reasons to frown upon apocalyptic and the terrifying scenarios they cherished of eschatological battle. Today, we have a very similar phenomenon with Islam, where many desperate or sometimes “merely” very angry people share the notion that if they but light the spark, God will take care of causing the conflagration. Apocalyptic is extremely relevant today. Daniel and his “group,” and similarly-positioned Jews, including Jesus and his early followers, constitute a most interesting and inspiring case of faith and devotion rightly (as we believe) carried to the “apocalyptic extreme.”

Dan takes its name from a very ancient personage, mentioned along with two other ancients, Job and Noah, in Ezek 14:14. This in itself is significant. Daniel, *daniyy’el*, or *dan’el* (“God judges”), was known from the Ugaritic literature as a wise and righteous man.¹³³ Apocalyptic literature is based on visions from the heavenly world, usually granted to very ancient figures (such as Enoch, an antediluvian —before-the-Flood— patriarch, Gen 5:21-24; Jude 14). Such a scenario seems to be evoked by the use of the name Daniel here, although he is literarily situated in the Babylonian Exile. The ancient, pre-Mosaic character of the apocalyptic visionaries will be seen to be relevant later on in these pages. We merely note it for now in the case of Daniel, which,

¹³² The Aramaic parts of Dan are found in 2:4^b-7:28.

¹³³ Cf. JOHN L. MCKENZIE, *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York – London: Macmillan, 1965), 171. Ugarit was a civilization in the area of Phoenecia/Syria/Lebanon (to the north of Israel, one hundred miles north of Beirut, on the coast, modern day Ras Shamra) which predated the arrival of Israel in the Holy Land by hundreds of years. As we have indicated, the influence of its myths, and its language, are powerfully felt throughout the Bible. See SMITH, *The Memoirs of God*, 89-105 and *passim*.

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otherwise, is a relatively “tame” apocalypse, and as much an integral part of orthodox or traditional Judaism as is possible for an apocalypse (it did make it into the canon!). Similarly, the apocalypticism of the New Testament is quite tame (as opposed to “wild-eyed,” if you get my drift), with the possible exception of the book from which came the name for this type of literature, the Book of Revelation (in Greek, *apokálypsis*, the first word in the book).¹³⁴

Dan is divided into two parts. Daniel is a young man in the Babylonian Exile, and is described in terms parallel to Joseph, another young man in Egyptian Exile. Both are said to be wise and understanding (Dan 1:17, 20; Gen 41:33, 39), but these are God-given talents, Gen 41:38-39; Dan 2:21-23. Both resist the temptation to adapt to pagan ways, and both are able to interpret dreams.

The two parts of Dan are united by references to the Kingdom of God and by a schematization of world history whereby ages dominated by pagan empires are represented by images; in the first part, these ages are represented by a statue composed of a descending order of metals, from the head of gold to the feet of clay. A stone (which has significance in the Bible, see e.g. 1 Pet 2:6-8), without human intervention, hits the feet of clay on which the whole statue stands and brings it down (pulverizes it, like the molten calf in Exod 32:20) all at once; Dan 2:31-45. In the second part of Dan, the empires are represented by beasts; Dan 7:1-8. Another idea that is present in both parts is that of God’s dominion, in Aramaic *shaltan*, in the Greek of the LXX *exousía*. This word is used in the gospels and is usually translated “authority” (as in Mark 1:22, 27; 2:10). It belongs firstly to God (Dan 3:33; 4:31[NRSV 4:3, 34]; 6:27, who grants to it whom he will (Dan 4:29 [NRSV 4:32]), for a time to the beasts, Dan 7:6, but it will be taken away from them, Dan 7:12, 26 and given to “one like a son of man,” Dan 7:14, and to the saints of the Most High, Dan 7:27.

¹³⁴ By “wild-eyed,” I am referring to gory battle scenes, such as those of Isa 63:1-6; Zech 14:12-14; Rev 14:14-20; 16:1-20; 19:11-21. Note that it is God who fights, but that belligerent humans are only too eager to prod him on (see Matt 26:51-54). See 2 Chr 20:13-30. Regarding the Qumran “War Scroll,” R.E. BROWN, “Dead Sea Scrolls,” in the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 67:88, states that “Although the author seems to have drawn upon the military terminology of his time, the war is conducted according to theological designs rather than according to scientific military strategy. The dominant theme is that if the forces of good (or of light) are organized according to the proper semiliturgical scheme and if their standards and trumpets are properly inscribed with prayers, God will favor them and victory will be ensured.”

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The Book of Daniel as we have it, though it probably incorporates old stories in its first part (Dan 1-6), is widely agreed to date from *ca.* 165 B.C.E. It is thus the latest book in the Hebrew Bible (the latest book in the Catholic Bible is Wisdom, a Greek work from around the turn of the eras).¹³⁵ Dan 7-12 was composed during the Maccabean war against the Seleucids, which began in 167, but Dan does not know yet of the Maccabean victory in 164. Thus the date pretty close to 165.¹³⁶

Daniel has dreams and visions in the night. This is the stuff of apocalyptic, divine revelation full of images at times terrible which have to be interpreted. The interpreter is usually an angel, and angels there are in Dan, including Gabriel and Michael. Daniel’s great vision of the beasts coming out of the sea in Dan 7 is the beginning of the scenario which apocalypticists yearn for: the return to the state intended by God in the beginning of creation (the End will correspond to the Beginning, in eschatological thinking, and apocalyptic has much to do with eschatology).¹³⁷ In the beginning, in Gen, God had tamed the unruly Sea. He had made a good creation, and had given Adam (mankind) dominion over the beasts (Gen 1:28). This was the intended order. But sin had crept in and dominated, corrupting the earth, Gen 6:11-12, causing God to repent of having created. The “beasts” (the pagan empires; see, e.g., Ezek 34:5, 8, 25, 28) now dominated over mankind, especially over Israel. This was an inversion of the intended divine order, and this state of things would be reversed when God —perhaps after awakening from a long slumber— would act again, for the last time, in a new creation much greater than that in Noah’s time or in the time of the New exodus of the Second Isaiah, and, certainly definitively, for good. This would be the Kingdom of God, the messianic age, the time of God’s visitation and salvation.

And so dominion (“authority”) was taken from the beasts, in Daniel’s vision, and given to “one like a son of man,” Dan 7:9-14. Daniel sees thrones set up; on one sat the Ancient of Days, evocative of the Ugaritic El, the “Father of Days,” dressed in white with

¹³⁵ The suffering of the righteous “son of God” at the hands of the wicked in Wis 2-5 is echoed in Matt 27:43 (Wis 2:18-20); cf. Ps 22:8-9.

¹³⁶ We do not discuss here the deuterocanonical sections of Dan, including Dan 13-14. In our discussion here, Dan ends with Dan 12, a very significant ending.

¹³⁷ See, again, Isa 51:9-11.

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white hair. And who was the other throne for? For some rabbis, it was for the Messiah.¹³⁸ See Ps 89 and its references to David the Anointed and his seed, the divine council, the taming of Sea and smashing of Rahab the Sea Monster, the divine throne, the divine sonship of David etc.

It is a Final Judgment scene, and the books of account are opened. Myriads of angels serve the Ancient God. Then Daniel sees that with (or on) the clouds came “one like a son of man,” Dan 7:13.¹³⁹ The expression means “human being,” in Hebrew “son of Adam.” This individual is given the dominion which was taken away from the beasts; he was given an everlasting dominion, and glory, and all the pagan nations will worship him, and his kingdom will never be destroyed. In the LXX, the word *exousía*, translated as “authority” in the New Testament, appears three times in Dan 7:14, as does the Aramaic *shaltan*. This represents the eschatological reversal of the evil state of the world in the interim period between the good original creation and the new eschatological creation.

This coming state of things is the Kingdom of God, as Dan 7:15-28 shows. In this section, those who receive what the “one like a son of man” was said to be given previously are the “saints of the Most High.” The “one like a son of man” was thus originally a collective entity, “he” represented a group, the good Jews who had remained faithful during Antiochus IV’s pogrom which attempted to wipe out Judaism. But many scholars see that the expression may also indicate an angelic being, such as Michael, who appears in Dan 12:1, as the angel assigned to Israel and in some way representing Israel (see Deut 32:8 for the idea that each nation had its own “angel”). In any case, the expression “son of man” became, in the Jewish tradition, a term for the Messiah. This is the way that it is used, mostly by Jesus himself, in the gospels. In other Jewish works, like 1 Enoch, which we will discuss, the term has become merged with the Servant of Isaiah. Thus this passage is extremely significant for an understanding of the gospels, Christianity and the New Testament.

In Dan 9:1-2, the prophet (as Matt 24:15 calls him) is pondering what Jeremiah meant when he prophesied that the Exile would last seventy years. Daniel prays and

¹³⁸ We will have occasion to discuss Matt 25:31, where the Son of Man, accompanied by all his angels, sits on the throne of his glory to conduct the Last Judgment.

¹³⁹ Jesus speaks of the Son of Man coming with the clouds, e.g., in Mark 13:26; 14:62.

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confesses his guilt and that of his people. In Dan 9, we see that this book is devoted to the Law of Moses and uses Deuteronomistic language, and the verb *shuv* in 9:13. As a result of his plea, the angel Gabriel flew to him and explained how he should read Jer 25:11-12; 29:10. In Hebrew, these texts were written only with consonants, without vowels. Vowels were inserted in the Hebrew text of the Bible centuries later. One determined how to vocalize words by their context, as is done in modern Israeli Hebrew today (few words are printed with vowels, when this is necessary). The word “seventy” in Hebrew is transliterated *shv’yim*, but this is the same as the word for “weeks”! “Seventy” would be vocalized *shavu’im*, and “weeks” is vocalized *shiv’im*. Gabriel is telling Daniel to read the consonants both ways, thereby arriving at “seventy weeks of years” instead of merely “seventy years.”¹⁴⁰

Daniel, in good apocalyptic fashion, is trying to determine when the awful state of things will end. It is not “just” about the great threat of extermination of his people and their observance of the Law of the true God which will disappear with them if they are all destroyed (all the faithful ones, that is). It is about when God will finally intervene in this horrible world—such it was for his servants who had not adapted to the world’s ways; cf. John 17:14-18. Daniel believed in the words of Jeremiah, but seventy years had long passed (if we keep in mind that his audience is living *ca.* 165 B.C.E.).¹⁴¹ How could Jer be interpreted so as to validate his prophecy? The answer had been provided by angelic revelation. There was now reason to hope that the wait would not be too long. We should note that knowledge of the period after the Babylonian Exile was very poor among Jews, so 490 years (70 x 7) was a pretty good estimate. But Dan in fact tries to be very specific; in 7:25, he mentions three-and-a-half years (1,260 days); in 8:14, he speaks of 2,300 evenings and mornings, perhaps 1,150 days; in 12:12-13, still other numbers are given. Although some have tried ingenious ways of making sense of all these figures, I think that what we have are revisions of prior calculations which were disproved but which, in

¹⁴⁰ See the article by MARC Z. BRETTLER, “The Hebrew Bible’s Interpretation of Itself,” in the *New Oxford Annotated Bible. Third Edition* (Oxford – New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 473 ESSAYS. If to English-speakers the consonants in “weeks” and “seventy” are not even close, note that “weeks,” e.g., in Italian is *settimane*, and “seventy” is *settanta*.

¹⁴¹ Recall the expectation that Jeremiah’s prediction would be shortly fulfilled in Zech 1:12, not long after the Babylonian Exile (in 520).

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true biblical fashion, are allowed to stand side by side in “seeming” contradiction as food for Talmudic and other minds.

We have gone on at some length here because the passage reveals much about biblical interpretation, and also because the notion of a period of time which must be completed or fulfilled will be exceedingly important for Jesus and the early Christians, as it was for many Jews in the intertestamental era.

We now come to the end of the Book of Daniel. The short section we know as Dan 12 (chapter divisions were unknown in the Bible until the Middle Ages, verse numbering not until the sixteenth century) is a most remarkable conclusion to the latest book of the Hebrew Bible. It tells of the final battle to be waged by the great angelic prince Michael against the evil forces (cf. Rev 12). The world had never experienced such anguish (in Greek, *thlipsis*, an important apocalyptic term for the final tribulation; cf. Mark 13:19) before. It is then that the final judgment books of account will be examined in order to mete out reward and punishment.

But for this, resurrection is necessary, and Dan 12:2 is the only totally unambiguous statement of the resurrection of the dead in the Hebrew Bible (cf. 2 Macc 7). “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awaken,” some for everlasting life, others for scorn and everlasting *dēraon* (a special type of shame only found elsewhere in Isa 66:24; Yahweh’s servants shall view the corpses of the wicked who rebelled against him; their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be the *dēraon* of all flesh [living creatures]).¹⁴²

What does “many” (or “multitude”) mean? This is debated, and it could be argued that only the very good and the very wicked (as opposed to the mediocre or lukewarm) shall rise for judgment. The Bible at times avoids the “all flesh” expression (as in Isa 40:5; Job 34:15 etc.) and uses “many.” This is the expression used by Jesus in Mark 10:45; 14:24; Matt 22:14 (“many are called, but few are chosen”), or by Simeon in Luke 2:34-35. It echoes Isa 52:13-53:12, where, as we noted, *rabbîm* appears five times (once meaning “great,” in 53:12, otherwise meaning “many”). It virtually means “all,” but stops just short of this. There is probably a link to the fourth Servant poem here, as we shall see.

¹⁴² This last verse of Isa is so terrible that it is read before v. 23 in the synagogue.

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We are told that a special group will shine like the stars in the firmament.¹⁴³ They are the *maskîlîm*, translated “wise teachers” or “learned.” There is no good translation. It is a special term, from the verb *sakal*, “to act prudently, be successful, teach.” The *sakal* keeps quiet in bad times, Amos 5:13. The messianic king will be *hiskîl*, Jer 23:5. According to the Jewish scholar H.L. Ginsberg, the term is coined from the verb applied to the servant in Isa 52:13, “Behold, my Servant *shall prosper (yaskîl)*.”¹⁴⁴ The Servant and the *maskîlîm* both “justify many” (Isa 53:11, bearing their sins; Dan 12:3, sometimes translated “teach or lead to righteousness”). In Dan 11:33, these *maskîlîm* make many understand, but suffer martyrdom in the process. These *maskîlîm* are said to be refined, purified, made white, “until the time of the End,” which is still a bit in the future.¹⁴⁵ So these martyrs of the Seleucid pogrom suffer for others, or vicariously, like the Servant of Isaiah 53.¹⁴⁶

We can posit a group of righteous, pious (and, in this non-technical sense, “hasidic”) Jews behind Dan (“the Daniel group”). More specifically, the leaders of a specific type of resistance to the Seleucids; they called themselves *maskîlîm*, echoing the Suffering Servant and the other persecuted servants in the latter part of the Book of Isaiah. They *do* understand (Dan 12:10; cf. Mark 13:14), even as they go through the eschatological trial which refines as precious metals are purified (cf. Wis 3:1-8; 1 Pet 1:6-7).¹⁴⁷ Most scholars believe that Dan 11:34 refers to the Maccabees: armed struggle is only a “little help.” The Daniel group is commonly thought to be pacifist, unlike the Maccabees (who innovated the permission to fight on Sabbath), and perhaps already intuited the corruption that the Maccabee (Hasmonean) dynasty would represent. With the Daniel group, we have another glimpse of Jews divided into various factions. This group, however, is of particular interest for understanding Christian origins.

¹⁴³ Cf. Matt 13:43. Since stars represented deities in antiquity, some scholars see hints of deification (divinization) in these expressions.

¹⁴⁴ See his article “The Oldest Interpretation of the Suffering Servant,” *Vetus Testamentum* 3 (1953), 400-404.

¹⁴⁵ Note the same language used for the martyrs in the “great tribulation,” Rev 7:13-14, except they have washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb (cf. Gen 49:11).

¹⁴⁶ The Qumranites also suffered and made atonement (expiated) for sin, and for the Land. The *maskîl* (“instructor”) figures prominently in the Dead Sea Scrolls, as does the term “many” (or “multitude”).

¹⁴⁷ Fire is an integral element of this final purification. The Qumranites shared this view, as did John the Baptist and Jesus (Matt 3:11; Luke 12:49-50; cf. Mark 9:49; Acts 2:1-4; 15:7-9).

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Dan ends with a couple of mysterious calculations as to the time of the End. One must wait patiently (“patient endurance,” in Greek *hypomonē*, is a standard New Testament term for holding out until the End; see 1 Thess 1:3 [noun]; Mark 13:13 [verb]). Daniel is told to go rest and await his lot “at the End of the days.” And thus ends the book which is placed at the end of some versions of the LXX (e.g., Rahlfs’ edition of the *Septuaginta*).

Jewish Apocalyptic and the Intertestamental Period: 1 Enoch and Qumran

The importance of this topic. Christianity cannot be understood without some knowledge of Jewish apocalyptic, which flourished in the intertestamental period (from about 200 B.C.E. to about 100 C.E., by which time most of the literature included in the New Testament had been written) and beyond. Thus, “intertestamental” means “between the two testaments,” and it is the period which concerns us now. Knowing a bit about this period is very important, because the ideas and expectations contained in the Hebrew Bible and the LXX continued to develop into the time of Jesus and beyond. We cannot understand Jesus’ message, ministry or Passion, or early Christianity and the New Testament, without understanding the religious thought-world in which they lived and breathed. Our main witnesses for this is the literature which flourished in the time between the Testaments, but which did not make it into the Jewish canon or the New Testament (with some exceptions, since some Christian canons do contain one or more of these works, usually called “pseudepigrapha,” because they are written under pseudonyms).¹⁴⁸

Apocalyptic dominates much of this literature and period. It is a time of great expectations, when God’s final theophany, or Parousia (appearance) would take place and he would finally save his people.¹⁴⁹ One of the elements of much apocalyptic is in fact the calculation of the time of the End, as we saw in Dan (cf. Rev 1:3; 12:12, 14;

¹⁴⁸ Catholics used to call these books the “apocrypha” (hidden”) of the Old Testament.

¹⁴⁹ SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 80, states that “Wanke has argued that the matrix of virtually all post-exilic prophecy is located in the mental climate created by Second Isaiah’s proclamation that the time of judgment was at an end and the time of Israel’s salvation had arrived.” One could point also to Haggai’s insistence around 520 that the turn-around (the *peripeteia*, or sudden change in a Greek story) would be “in a little while,” Hag 2:6, 18. The unfulfillment of these prophecies led to the dejection which is manifest in Malachi about seventy years later, Mal 2:17.

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22:10), but this is corrected in Mark 13:32. Essential to Jesus’ proclamation, however, is that “the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God has drawn near” (cf. Mark 9:1; 13:20; 1 Thess 4:15-17 [an apocalyptic text]; 1 Cor 7:29). We shall see certain features of apocalyptic literature (and perhaps get a glimpse of the people behind it) by briefly examining two representative bodies of work, which are otherwise extremely important for understanding the New Testament. I should further note that in my opinion, the original apocalyptic notion is the prophetic one that true prophecy derives from access to the divine, celestial, court, the *sôd* of Yahweh (something like God’s “kitchen cabinet”), where he deliberates with his advisers, as it were. The word is at times translated “council, counsel, plan, secret.” In the background is the divine council of the Ugaritic literature, with El presiding over the “sons of El,” that is, the lesser deities. This is thought to be behind the plural “let *us* make Adam in *our* own image,” Gen 1:26. A good example of this is the scene in Job 1:6-12, where the Satan, a prosecuting attorney (as later the Johannine Paraclete is like the defense attorney) has his role. A very explicit presentation of the *sôd* and its deliberations is in 1 Kgs 22, where there is also a “lying spirit” similar to the Satan; cf. Zech 3:1-7. Thus, many prophetic books are entitled “vision,” and this indicates access to the divine council, like “hearing it from the horse’s mouth.” See, e.g., Isa 1:1 (cf. Isa 2:1-4, and the dialogue in which the prophet participates in Isa 6:1-11; 40:6); Amos 1:1; 3:7; 7:1-9; Jer 23:18, 22 (access to the *sôd* means one both sees and hears God’s word). So “apocalyptic” has to do with divine revelation, which is what the name means in Greek (in Spanish, Rev is called *Apocalipsis*).¹⁵⁰

1 Enoch. Many beginning Bible students may not recall ever hearing of Enoch or the work known as “1 Enoch” or the “Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch.” This work is explicitly cited in Jude 14, which mentions that Enoch was “seventh after Adam” (see Gen 5:1-18), and prophesied about “them” (certain evildoers in Judas’ own time).¹⁵¹ There are many other less explicit references or allusions to 1 Enoch in this epistle. This is an indication that circles behind the New Testament writings held 1 Enoch in great

¹⁵⁰ PAOLO SACCHI, *L’apocalittica giudaica e la sua storia* (Brescia: Paideia, 1990), 42, says that when prophecy ceased in Israel, that is when apocalyptic emerged, as a new kind of revelation (by illumination) denoting a new kind of salvation. This book has been translated into English.

¹⁵¹ Note the references in Jude to improper commingling of “flesh;” this is a reference to the sin of the angels in Gen 6:1-4 (who had sex with human women) and of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen 19:1-11, who had sex with the two angels who had visited Abraham. The importance of this will be seen shortly.

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esteem; perhaps here we could mention the great similarity between Matt 25:31 and 1 Enoch 62:5 (where the Son of Man likewise sits on the throne of his glory to judge).¹⁵²

1 Enoch is part of the canon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Although 1 Enoch has close affinities with important elements of the gospels and of the New Testament, it was rejected by Judaism and seldom copied, and this probably had much to do with its non-inclusion in the standard canon of the Christian New Testament.¹⁵³ The Ethiopian Church highly esteemed it, and although the original languages were Semitic (Aramaic, perhaps some Hebrew), the only complete copy we have of 1 Enoch is the Ethiopic translation from a Greek translation.

Why are we interested in 1 Enoch? 1 Enoch represents an alternative form of Judaism operative in the time of Jesus, when, as we have stated, there was much pluralism and no dominant party; if there was a “dominant” party, they would have been the Sadducees and others linked to foreign rule, and these not only were not popular with the majority of the people; they had little to do with the thought-world of pious Jews of the type we encounter in Jesus and those who had most in common with him and his followers (except as adversaries, of course). Paolo Sacchi, a provocative Italian scholar, along with his disciple Gabriele Boccaccini, even posit two main divisions in Judaism, that of “Zadokite Judaism” (mainstream Judaism, including the Pharisees, which makes the appellation “Zadokite” a bit strange) and “Enochic Judaism.” Without going that far, I would point to several factors in Enoch which I believe are very important for understanding Jesus’ views and those of the New Testament.

First, as some point out, 1 Enoch may be a sort of Pentateuch, five books (plus appendices), that contrast with the Mosaic Torah. In fact, the Torah and the Sinai covenant are of little importance in 1 Enoch, which takes “a dim view of the Jerusalem

¹⁵² A popular edition of this type of literature is the two volume work edited by James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*.

¹⁵³ Tertullian (around 200 C.E.) disagreed with those Christians who were so influenced by the Hebrew canon; Augustine recognized that truths were to be found in the “Old Testament apocrypha,” but pointed to the fact that the paucity of copies of books like 1 Enoch, and the fact that the Jews had not transmitted these texts anywhere near as carefully as the canonical texts made them very unreliable, and “impossible to validate ‘because of their age’ [Enoch was an antediluvian patriarch; how could his book have survived the Flood!];” WILLIAM ADLER, “The Pseudepigrapha in the Early Church,” in *The Canon Debate* (L.M. McDonald – James A. Sanders, eds.; Peabody: Hendrikson, 2002), 224. 0

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Temple and its cult;” the real Temple is in heaven.¹⁵⁴ Enoch is much prior to Moses. Early Christianity, and Jesus himself, had an eschatological mind-set: the End Time would be a return to the state originally intended by God in the beginning, but which went awry due to sin and the Fall. Examples of this are Jesus’ going behind Mosaic legislation, as when he criticizes Moses’ allowance of divorce and remarriage (in Deut 24) by saying that it was not so in the Beginning, Matt 19:3-8. The contrasts or antitheses in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5, and Matt is considered by many to also be a five-book work) are presented as Jesus’ own exposition of God’s will, and as a modification of Mosaic Torah (or, at least, as an authoritative interpretation of God’s will that goes against the grain of dominant Jewish tradition); cf. Mark 7:1-23, which contradicts not merely Pharisaic interpretation of Torah (*halakah*): by “cleansing or declaring clean” all foods, what does Jesus do to Lev? Paul, also, in Gal 3:17, goes behind the Mosaic covenant back to the Promise made to Abraham, which “trumps” the Sinai covenant. And the prologue of John definitely contrasts Jesus and Moses.

Secondly, 1 Enoch has a “preterhuman” view of sin (Sacchi). Sin is not due originally to human fault, but has a cosmic origin; it is due to the primal sin, sins committed by angels beginning on the fourth day of creation. The world is profoundly defiled, impure, because of this; it is under the dominance of evil spirits. The Flood was only a superficial cleansing; a cleansing by fire would be needed.¹⁵⁵ This is in line with the deep pessimism of apocalyptic: the world is in such a bad, utterly corrupt state, that only a new creation by divine intervention will suffice to remedy it. Mere reform has

¹⁵⁴ See GEORGE W.E. NICKLESBURG, *1 Enoch 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 50, 55. The Qumran “Temple Scroll,” which has a rewritten Torah, avoids all mention of Moses, the mediator, to stress that their interpretation of Torah and supplements to it are direct from God. They criticize Solomon’s Temple and await the eschatological one God will himself build, which will be a new creation. Like the Enochians, Qumran follows a solar calendar. The name of God for them is an ‘almost hyposticized divine presence’; see LAWRENCE H. SCHIFFMAN, “The Theology of the Temple Scroll,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 85, No. 1-2 (Jul.-Oct. 1994), 109-123. He is of the opinion that in the Qumran scroll known as “MMT” “the period of return expected by Deuteronomy has indeed dawned” (123).

¹⁵⁵ See GABRIELE BOCCACCINI, *The Roots of Rabbinic Judaism, An Intellectual History from Ezekiel to Daniel* (Grand Rapids – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2002), 91. Note the theme of fire in the ministry of John the Baptist (Matt 3/Luke 3), and this theme as well as the omnipresence of evil spirits requiring exorcism in the ministry of Jesus. Cf. Eph 6:10-13; Col 2:15. One could also point to Jesus’ cleansing or purification of the leper in Mark 1:40-44 and of the woman with the blood flow in Mark 5:25-34; menstruation rendered very impure (see Lev 20:18). Purity was of enormous concern to the “Enochians,” but they did not see the solution in the Temple cult. Cf. John the Baptist’s non-Temple baptism “unto the forgiveness of sins.” Jesus’ “cleansing of the Temple” was really a symbol of its destruction. More on this later.

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been proven to be inefficacious. Where were the effects of the new covenant of Jeremiah 31, or the other covenant of Deut 28/29, or the new heart of Ezek 36? Clearly, all that had been done after the Exile consisted of temporary, half-way measures. Devout Jews of the Enochic type expected, demanded, needed, much more.¹⁵⁶

Thirdly, the approach to time of 1 Enoch and related literature was different than that of mainstream Judaism. This book advocates the use of a solar calendar, perhaps an ancient priestly calendar older than the lunar calendar adopted in Babylon. Enoch himself had lived a significant 365 years, Gen 5:22-24, before being taken up to God (only Elijah was likewise privileged), where he received his revelatory visions.¹⁵⁷ The Qumranites also espoused a solar calendar, and this was a significant “dissident” position to take vis-à-vis “official Judaism.” It is possible, as Annie Jaubert has argued, that Jesus and his followers celebrated Passover on a different day than most Jews, which would explain a significant discrepancy between the Synoptic and Johannine chronologies for the crucifixion (Passover before the crucifixion in the Synoptics, after according to John 18:28; 19:14, 31). Further, in the 1 Enoch section called the Apocalypse of Weeks, all history is divided into ten units called “weeks,” and

the ten ‘weeks’ total seventy units, itself a highly significant number in light of Jeremiah’s prediction that Jerusalem would be desolate for the seventy years of Babylonian control . . . and the decisive “week,” that is, the one in which the actual author lives and when the great turning point in history will begin is the seventh. As $7 \times 7 = 49$, the total brings to mind associations with the biblical jubilee (which the author of *Jubilees* [another work advocating the solar calendar and very important at Qumran] and others understood as a forty-nine-year unit).¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Both 1 Enoch and Qumran will depict a “heavenly, eschatological high priest commissioned to cleanse the polluted earth;” NICKLESBURG, *1 Enoch 1*, 54. In 1 Enoch, it is the archangel Michael (which some associate with the Danielic Son of man); in Qumran, 11QMelchizedek, it is Melchizedek, “portrayed as a divine hypostasis,” (Rabbi) JOSEPH M. BAUMGARTNER, “Messianic Forgiveness of Sin in CD 14:19 (4Q266 10 I 12-13),” in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Technological Innovations, New Texts & Reformulated Issues* (D.W. Parry – E.W. Ulrich, eds.; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill Academic, 1999), 537-544.

¹⁵⁷ See also Heb 11:5.

¹⁵⁸ VANDERKAM, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 104. In 11QMelchizedek, mentioned above, “Melchizedek is to proclaim liberty [*dʿror*, Lev 25:10; Isa 61:1] for all the Sons of Light by releasing them from the burden of their sins. This will take place on the day of Atonement at the end of the tenth jubilee;” BAUMGARTNER, “Messianic Forgiveness,” 539. Jesus proclaims the eschatological “liberty” of Isa 61 in Luke 4:18-21 as being fulfilled “today.” I believe that what we are to pray for in the Lord’s Prayer (“forgive us ur sins”) depends on our forgiving others their sins *and debts* (Luke 11:4) as in the Jubilee year cancellation of all indebtedness; see the Sabbatical year provisions in Deut 15:1-3.

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We recall the use of “weeks” in Dan 9 to interpret Jeremiah’s prophecy, and to provide calculations for the end of the period before salvation arrived. In both, as at Qumran, the period is that of ten Jubilees, or 490 years. In the Qumran document 11QMelchizedek, which announces eschatological forgiveness of sin on the tenth Jubilee, this final Day of Atonement is identified with the “good news” of Isa 40 and Isa 61 (which mentions the “anointed [messiah] of the Spirit”). Jesus does not seem to have formed part of the scholarly, scribal, esoteric circles which cultivated such intricate calendrical calculations, but when he proclaimed, as part of the kernel of his message, that the “time was fulfilled,” he may well have had in mind something like the end of the period of waiting prophesied by Jeremiah, Second Isaiah and Daniel; his use of the Jubilee word “liberty” in Luke 4 points to just such an idea (this would not be just another Jubilee to be repeated after another 49 years!).

The most celebrated section of 1 Enoch are the “Parables or Similitudes,” chapters 37-71, now “Book Two” in the manuscripts.¹⁵⁹ This is the latest part of 1 Enoch to have been composed, but we have not yet given any dates of composition for 1 Enoch. Roughly, the earliest parts are from the third century B.C.E.; Aramaic copies of the “Astronomical Book” (the earliest chapters of 1 Enoch) have been found in Qumran dating “from a time not far from 200 B.C.E.”¹⁶⁰ The date of the Similitudes is disputed; since 1 Enoch was so important at Qumran, why do the copies not contain the Similitudes? The Qumran settlement was destroyed in the war of the Jews against Rome, in 68 C.E. So some scholars think that the Similitudes were composed after that date. But very prominent Enoch scholars, like George Nicklesburg and James VanderKam, believe that they could date from the end of the first century B.C.E. or early in the first century C.E.¹⁶¹

It is in the Similitudes in which the Son of Man figures so prominently. He is a combination redeemer figure: Son of Man hidden before all eternity, but also the Messiah

¹⁵⁹ Formerly the second book was that of the Giants; recall that a race of giants was the product of the illicit sexual union of angels and human women in Gen 6; it was the spirits of these giants loose in the world which unleashed such evil in the world, an evil which was beyond human strength to overcome, according to Enochic lore.

¹⁶⁰ VANDERKAM, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 89.

¹⁶¹ VANDERKAM, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 110; NICKLESBURG, *1 Enoch 1*, 7: “This section, which will be treated in volume 2 of this commentary, appears to be the latest of the Enochic texts and probably dates to the late first century B.C.E.”

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and the Chosen-Righteous Servant of Isaiah. He sits on his “throne of glory” to judge, just like Jesus the Son of man in Matt 25:31. Note how this represents a development from the time of Dan 7 *ca.* 165 B.C.E. There it is not clear that the “one like a son of man (human being)” was the Messiah (though Jewish tradition would arrive at this later). Neither is there a clear connection between the “one like a son of man” and the Servant of Isaiah, although the “saints of the Most High” (who are described as receiving the Kingdom, dominion and other prerogatives in terms very similar to the “one like a son of man,” Dan 7:18, 27), via the *maskilim*, seem to be linked to the Isaianic servants. But all these connections, or rather, combinations or confections, occur clearly in the Parables or Similitudes of Enoch.¹⁶² There are many other relevant features of this literature, known to Jude and other New Testament writers, and to Jesus himself, which we could discuss, but cannot, in the context of this introduction. But at least we know that Jewish groups were engaged in the same kind of “unitive exegesis” (as F.F. Bruce said of the Qumran texts) as the New Testament writers, and Jesus himself, were doing at the same time. This situates the Jesus movement in the context of the late Second Temple period and its religious ideas, images and expectations, and allows us to better, more fully and accurately, interpret the biblical texts.

Qumran. On the northwest corner of the Dead Sea, beginning in 1947, were found numerous scrolls written in Hebrew (most), Aramaic (fewer) and Greek (only a few), which date from about 200 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.¹⁶³ This is an amazing library probably hidden away in the caves of Khirbet Qumran (Arabic for “the “ruins of Qumran”) by an Essene group, in order to prevent its destruction during the war against Rome 66-73 C.E. It was accidentally found by Bedouin shepherds, and has provided us not only with the oldest copies of the Hebrew Bible (and the only complete scroll of Isaiah, for example), but also with the writings and biblical interpretations of very pious Jews who were Jesus’ contemporaries and who shared many similar ideas with John the Baptist, Jesus and the early Christians. It thus is a very important find in order to understand Jesus’ world, and that of the early Church. No, Jesus is not mentioned in the Scrolls, nor is John the Baptist, despite the sensationalist claims that have been made, often by fanciful amateurs, at times

¹⁶² One important difference, however, is that although the Son of Man in 1 Enoch delivers those who suffer, he does not himself suffer; see VANDERKAM, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 112.

¹⁶³ See VERMES, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 10, 13.

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by opportunistic scholars. And, no, the Catholic Church did not hide the Scrolls for fear that it would destroy Christianity, as certain movies suggest.¹⁶⁴ In fact, the original international team of Dead Sea Scrolls scholars included several Catholic priests, who broadly lectured and published on the Scrolls. Most noteworthy among them was the great French Dominican Roland De Vaux, a worthy successor at the École Biblique et Archéologique Française in Jerusalem to the eminent Père Marie-Joseph Lagrange, O.P., the founder of modern Roman Catholic biblical studies.¹⁶⁵

Let us begin our discussion of the relevance of Qumran for the New Testament (and for Jesus) by pointing to a remarkable foundational text. Both the Qumranites and John the Baptist are associated with the beginning of Second Isaiah, “in the desert (or wilderness) prepare the way of the Lord,” Isa 40:3; Mark 1:3; “Community Rule,” 1QS VIII, 14. Now Second Isaiah, in the late Babylonian Exile, proclaims the good news of liberation: the exiles have already paid (expiated) for their sins and can now return to the Land in a New Exodus far greater than the one from Egypt; this is the end of the captivity, the reversal of fortunes, the time of salvation and new creation. The Qumranites, aware that in the time after Isaiah sin had not stopped and salvation had not come, withdrew into an “artificial” Exile in “Damascus” (actually, the Desert or Wilderness of Judea), to prepare for the coming of the God of judgment and salvation.¹⁶⁶ They were the community of the New Covenant of Jer 31, the true Israel, the “converts or

¹⁶⁴ There are no New Testament texts which are clearly dependent on anything composed by the Qumranites. There are many ideas which are paralleled in the Scrolls. Two passages which have language quite close or identical to that found in Qumran are “sons of light” passages (the Qumranites called themselves the “sons of light”), 1 Thess 5:5; Luke 16:8; John 12:36, and 2 Cor 6:14-15 (Belial or Beliar was the name for the devil in certain circles, including Qumran). When discussing the ideas of Qumran or of the Scrolls, I am referring to their extrabiblical writings. By the way, at least partial copies have been found of all the books in the Bible except Esther. At the time of the community’s disappearance from Qumran (ca. 68 C.E.), it seems clear that there was no fixed canon of the Hebrew Bible (that is, after the Torah and the Prophets, different groups considered different books to be in or out), and the text of the Hebrew Bible was not yet uniform (the Qumran manuscripts, e.g., have different spelling, etc., at times contents). Qumran is thus important both for the history of the biblical text and of the canon.

¹⁶⁵ See the colorful descriptions of the charismatic De Vaux in EDMUND WILSON, *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea* (New York: Oxford, 1965), 45-48. See also the references to him in the index of FRANK MOORE CROSS, *The Ancient Library of Qumran. 3rd Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1958, 1961², 1995³).

¹⁶⁶ “Damascus” as a place of Exile is mentioned as such in an early text, Amos 5:27. The voluntary Exile of the Qumranites was still on the west side of the Jordan, that is, within Israel. “Damascus” may thus have been appropriate as a name, since it was nearer than Egypt or Babylon. Note that the quote from Amos 5:27 in Acts 7:43 has “Babylon” instead of “Damascus”!, and this does not come from the LXX. In the New Testament, Rome is called “Babylon” in 1 Pet 5:13 and in Rev.

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penitents (or, if you want, “returnees,” *sh^evy*: these are all possible translations of this derivative of the verb *shuv*; CD col. xix-xx) of Israel.”

This is a most important concept. Our main thesis throughout these pages has been that “exile” is a metaphor or a metonym (a figure of speech used to refer to another thing, in this case, a deeper, spiritual or theological reality) for the time before “salvation,” or, in more Jewish terms, before entry into the messianic age or into God’s rest or inheritance. After the Babylonian Exile, the Jews had returned to the Land, but this was not the end of Exile, as witnessed by Zech 1:12 and Dan 9:1-2. Here we have the Essenes, or the Qumranites (which may have been the stricter, more committed branch of the more spread-out Essene movement, which Josephus numbers at 4,000), voluntarily exiling themselves in preparation for God’s coming, viewed as a divine manifestation to take place after the eschatological battle between the “sons of light” and the “sons of darkness,” to be followed by the final judgment and redemption. This is a simplified description of what “they” expected (scholars make many distinctions between documents, periods, etc.), but, essentially, the Qumranites (the people who copied, composed and preserved the Dead Sea Scrolls) expected the End Time in the near future. They did penance, saw themselves as “converts, penitents,” in Exile, awaiting the coming of one (or two) Messiahs, as well as the Eschatological Prophet (of Deut 18:15). They practised sexual abstinence (probably not actual “celibacy,” which is renunciation of marriage), probably to maintain themselves in the state of ritual purity required for the impending holy war.¹⁶⁷ They performed many ablutions, ritual washings associated with purification. They awaited the “anointed of the Spirit” of Isa 61 and a heavenly, eschatological redeemer who would finally cleanse from all sin and bring the final forgiveness (perhaps that spoken of in Jeremiah’s New Covenant passage,

Jer 31:31-34; cf. Heb 7-8). The “holy spirit” (which the Essene community has) purifies from all iniquity, and sin is atoned for; 1QS 3:7. In 4:21, the “spirit of truth” is

¹⁶⁷ VERMES, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 83, says that “The symbolic approach of the sect to sacrificial worship may account for Essene celibacy (where it was practised). Sexual abstinence was imposed on those participating in the temple services, both priests and laymen; no person who had sexual intercourse (or an involuntary emission, or even physical contact with a menstruating woman) could lawfully take part. More importantly still, bearing in mind the central place occupied by prophecy in Essene doctrine, clear indications exist in inter-Testamental and rabbinic literature that a similar renunciation was associated with the prophetic state.”

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sprinkled over the person like lustral waters which cleanse from all defilement, including that of the unclean spirit.

Let us again look at 11Q Melchizedek, the remarkable Qumran document we briefly discussed above. This will give us the opportunity to get a good glimpse of this Jewish sect’s expectations for the End Time of “salvation” (I place this word in quotation marks because it is mostly a Christian word now and might lead one to impose foreign categories on Jewish ideas). The fragments which have been published stress the Jubilee “release” of all debts; here “release” (*s^emittah*) comes from Deut 15:2, though Lev 25:13 (regarding the Jubilee) is also quoted. The Qumranites viewed Sacred Scripture as referring to their own days (like the early Christians did); the particular Qumranite commentary (or midrash) on Scripture, applying it to their own time, is called *peshet* (interpretation). This is their commentary here:

for G[od]. Its interpretation] for the last days refers to the captives, who [. . .] and whose teachers have been hidden and kept secret, and from the inheritance of Melchizedek, fo[r . . .] . . . and they are the inherita[nce of Melchize]dek, who will make them return. And liberty will be proclaimed for them, to free them from [the debt of] all their iniquities. And this [wil]l [happen] in the first week of the jubilee which follows the ni[ne] jubilees. And the d[ay of aton]ement is the e[nd of] the tenth [ju]bilee in which atonement shall be made for all the sons of [light and] for the men [of] the lot of Mel[chi]zedek. [. . .] over [the]m . . . [. . .] accor[ding to] a[ll] their [wor]ks, for it is the time for the «year of grace» of Melchizedek . . .¹⁶⁸

Note the following. Various Hebrew Bible passages are interpreted as referring to the End Time. The whole tenor of the passage is that “liberty” (the *d^eror* of Lev 25:10 and Isa 61:1) will be proclaimed to the “captives,” from the verb *shuv*. This “liberty” (release from debts, slavery, captivity, etc.) takes on the form also of forgiveness of sins, in the context of the Day of Atonement (on which the Jubilee is to take place, Lev 25:9). It will be on the tenth Jubilee, that is, after 49 x 10 years, or on the 490th year, as in Dan 9. This is called the “year of grace,” as in Isa 61:2 (quoted by Jesus in Luke 4:17-21). The Qumran text further on also explicitly refers to “the messenger who proclaims peace, who brings good news, who proclaims salvation,” of Isa 52:7, and interprets this messenger as

¹⁶⁸ *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition. Volume 2 (4Q274-11Q31)* (F. García Martínez – E.J.C. Tigchelaar, eds.; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill; Grand Rapids – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1997), 1207. The last three dots are mine (I stopped quoting); the other dots are in the text. The brackets indicate *lacunae* (gaps) and the conjectured restoration of the passage. I have omitted the verse numbers found in this edition.

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“the Anointed one of the spirit, concerning whom Dan[iel] said, [Until an anointed one, a prince (Dan. ix, 25)]”¹⁶⁹

There is also in Qumran the notion of an eschatological high priest who will expiate sins. This is found in a text which is similar to an intertestamental work known as the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, and specifically, the Testament of Levi. Rabbi Baumgartner describes the figure in the Qumran passage, after briefly quoting from the passage, thus:

“His word is like the word of the heavens, and his teaching according to the will of God. His sun will illumine the world and his fire will burn to all the ends of the earth.” Despite this glorification, he is depicted as the object of rejection and calumny on the part of his antagonists, much like the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. Yet, he is to atone for all the children of his generation . . .

* * *

The claim that [to atone for] always refers to ritual expiation is contradicted by the occasional usage in both biblical and Qumran usage of this phrase for divine forgiveness. Moreover, even if we take [*kipper*] in the sense of expiation, the allusion to the hostile disparagement suffered by the priest suggests that like the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:10) his humiliation was itself considered to constitute an [*asham*], a guilt offering for the sins of his generation.¹⁷⁰

We could say much more about the Qumranites and their Dead Sea Scrolls. They were a priestly sect who had separated themselves from Jerusalem and its Temple, which they deemed corrupt and in the hands of the wrong priests. They are thought to have been Zadokites who became apocalyptic under the influence of the Teacher of Righteousness, after ‘groping in the dark like blind men for twenty years’. They hated the Pharisees and were much stricter than them, but unlike most priests, became very eschatologically-oriented and apocalyptic, cherishing and interpreting the Prophets whom the Sadducees rejected. We have to stop here. But I hope that what we have seen sheds some light on the

¹⁶⁹ This quotation I took from VERMES, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 501, omitting his italics. The “Anointed of the spirit” is a reference to Isa 61:1. Cf. Acts 10:38.

¹⁷⁰ BAUMGARTNER, “Messianic Forgiveness,” 540. I omitted two footnotes, the Hebrew text at the end of the first paragraph, and transliterated the Hebrew words and placed them in brackets. The asterisks denote that I skipped part of the text I was quoting from.

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world in which Christianity emerged. This is what we hope becomes clearer in what follows.

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Chapter Seven: Jesus, the Early Church, and the New Testament

Jesus of Nazareth

John the Baptist and the historical origins of Jesus’ mission. John the Baptist has been linked with Qumran. The main thing they have in common is viewing their vocation in terms of Isa 40:3, “a voice cries out in the wilderness prepare the way of Yahweh.” I have left out the punctuation on purpose, as interpretations will differ (for the Qumranites, they were to be in the desert preparing the way of the Lord, as John the Baptist seems to have done; the LXX has the voice crying in the wilderness). John the Baptist was on the eastern shore of the Jordan baptizing, John 10:40, while the Qumranites were on the western shore. What John the Baptist seems to be doing is calling Israel to *return* to God (the *shuv* verb), that is, to repent or convert confessing their sins, being baptized (bathing or being washed) as symbolic of final purification (see Ezek 36:24-29). This will result in the new heart that finally obeys God, or at least, it is a preparation to receive this new condition. John comes proclaiming “a baptism of repentance *unto* the forgiveness of sins” (in Greek, *báptisma metanoías eis tēn áphesin hamartiōn*), not forgiveness itself; that is, it prepares you for the final judgment (by fire, as in Mal 3), after which you are declared or found to be righteous, and thus “forgiven” and saved.¹⁷¹ One is coming after John who is mightier and who purifies with fire, not mere water. This the Christians applied to Jesus. Note that fire purification was expected in Mal 3, Dan 11-12 and the Enochic literature. Cf. the combination of water and fire in Isa 4:4-6.

Unlike the Qumranites, John’s baptism was probably a once-for-all act (the Qumranites’ ablutions were daily and often), and those who were baptized crossed the Jordan to effect their return to the Land as a symbol of the end of Exile and the beginning of the End Time for which they had prepared by their penance. In this John may also well be in an eschatological-precursor role, probably that of Elijah, the awaited final

¹⁷¹ Cf. HARMUT STEGEMANN, *The Library of Qumran. On the Essenes, Qumran, John the Baptist and Jesus* (ET of 1993 German orig.; Grand Rapids – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans; Leiden – New York – Köln: Brill, 1998), 220. The late Prof. Stegemann’s book has had a profound influence on my understanding of Jesus’ eschatological ministry, as reflected here.

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messenger of Mal 3 (or 4, in some Bibles). John was dressed like Elijah, is identified as Elijah by Jesus in Matt 11:14; 17:13, and is on the other side of the Jordan where Elijah had left this world (2 Kgs 2:6-14) to return in the End, according to Jewish tradition.¹⁷² So John the Baptist in essence is announcing the final Exodus, the final end of Exile; this is what Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets, were discussing with Jesus in his Transfiguration, according to the Greek original of Luke 9:31. This is confirmed by John’s connection with Isa 40, which is the foundational text of the New Exodus.

Are there other links to John and the Qumranites? John is said to be from a priestly family, Luke 1:5. His father, however, was probably not an Essene, if he officiated in the Temple. Some speculate that John, like expelled Essenes, lived in the desert eating what kosher food could be found there, namely, wild honey and locusts. Here the titillating links end, however, and we are left quite short of any solid evidence of the Baptist ever having been an Essene: it is possible, but nothing more. The crucial difference between them is that John is calling on all Israel to conversion, rather than withdrawing away from all the impure Jews. In fact, it seems that, as with Jesus, publicans and prostitutes, whom the Qumranites would have condemned, were better prospects for John than the religious authorities (cf. Matt 3:7, probably redactional, with Luke 3:7; Matt 21:32). This openness of the Baptist to sinners tallies ill with the Qumranites’ hypersensitivity to the purity of the assembly, where no one even with any physical defects could be admitted, including ‘tottering old men’; Rule of the Congregation (1Q Sa II 3-8).¹⁷³

We know for certain that Jesus went to be baptized by John in the Jordan. The evangelists, believers in Jesus’ divine sonship and sinlessness, were “embarrassed” by this memory. Mark, the first of the canonical gospels to be written, simply has the scene, although marks (pardon the pun) of his redaction (the way in which he tells the story for his particular purposes and theology) are discernible. The next gospel to be written, Matthew’s, has a baptism “under protest;” this is the account we tend to recall, where John the Baptist protests that it is *Jesus* who should be baptizing *him*, whereupon Jesus

¹⁷² Certainly with theological interests, the fourth gospel has John the Baptist denying he is Elijah or the final prophet, John 1:21.

¹⁷³ The reason for this, however, was the beautiful notion that their liturgical assemblies were joint activities with the heavenly (angelic) host. Compare, however, Jesus’ attitude to the blind and lame who approached him in the Temple, Matt 21:14.

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replies that it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness (a major Matthean topic). Luke removes the Baptist from the scene by placing him in jail before back-handedly saying that, ‘oh, by the way, Jesus was baptized along with all the people’. John, the last gospel, has no such account or scene, but echoes of it remain in the reference to the Spirit, John 1:29-34.

Why did Jesus go to be baptized? Historically, Jesus was a pious Jew who awaited God’s reign. He was not satisfied with a society (and a world, to the extent he pondered it) which was corrupt, wracked by inequalities, and worse of all, under the rule of a foreign, pagan power, Rome. Jesus read Israel’s Scriptures, and knew that God’s kingdom was expected to come in the End Time of salvation, when God would finally visit his people. He knew that this would entail a judgment, which spelled ruin and punishment for the wicked, and salvation and reward for the good. It is clear that the immediate vehicle for these ideas, with the added feature that all this would take place in the very near future (“the axe is laid to the root,” Matt 3:10), was John the Baptist.

Jesus probably was a disciple of John the Baptist.¹⁷⁴ It is unlikely that he merely joined a crowd that was going to be baptized, though this is possible. It is clear he believed that John was a prophet. This is itself significant, given what we have said about prophecy having ended 400 years before. And if John was dressed like Elijah, this indicated that he was the End Time prophet or, at least, the precursor of the coming judgment. This places Jesus in eschatologically-oriented Judaism.

We have spoken of the probable significance of baptism on the other side of the Jordan: crossing the Jordan then symbolized entry into the Land, the final *return*, the end of Exile, the New and final Exodus (to which the good news of Isaiah 40:9 referred; see Luke 3:18). Jesus accepted this. A humble, penitent spirit was a prerequisite for this *return*, which as we have repeated, is the multivalent Hebrew verb *shuv*. Jesus, it seems, heeded the Baptist’s call and went to be baptized.

What happened then? Here we must leave the realm of history and *interpret* things. I here give my interpretation based on my careful study of the gospels as well as understanding of human psychology, spirituality and mysticism. I prefer to try to stick to Mark as much as possible, since it is the first gospel on which Matt and Luke (and

¹⁷⁴ For an interesting but fantastic account of what kind of discipleship this might have entailed, see BRUCE CHILTON, *Rabbi Jesus. An Intimate Biography* (New York – London etc.: Doubleday, 2000).

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perhaps even John) relied for much of their account. Mark tells us that upon emerging from the water, Jesus saw the heavens open and the Spirit coming into him in the form of a dove, and heard the voice of God saying that he, Jesus, was his “beloved Son” in whom God was pleased.

We can only speculate as to what happened and what it meant for Jesus. Being proclaimed “Son” in this manner points, in the first place to messiahship (as in Pss 2:7; 89:27-28, or 2 Sam 7). Jesus was crucified as “King of the Jews,” that is, for being considered to be a messianic pretender. The best basis for this accusation, politically, is Jesus’ “messianic entry” into Jerusalem during the national liberation feast of Passover, where he was acclaimed as king by the crowds (here John 12:12-15 is more historically reliable than Mark). We shall have occasion to discuss other “messianic” traits of Jesus. But we have now seen the link between the voice and being the Messiah (an End Time expectation).

The divine voice (and Jesus may have been seeing and hearing the divine court as the prophets did) calls Jesus “beloved” and says that God is “well-pleased” with him. It is clear, exegetically, that Mark is hereby linking Jesus with Isaac, called Abraham’s only beloved son in Gen 22 (“the sacrifice of Isaac,” which never took place), and with the Servant of Isaiah (Isa 42:1, in the first of the Servant poems, is quite similar).¹⁷⁵ The question is, did Jesus see himself in these roles? My answer is that he indeed did, and that such a clear sense of mission and purpose all the way to his death on the cross can only be based on a most profound, life-and-mission-defining mystical experience (cf. Paul’s in Gal 1:15-20). It would be foolhardy, I submit, to second-guess the Markan account here and doubt that Jesus had any such notions about himself.

Recall that by the time of Jesus, a multiplicity of redeemer figures, such as Son of man and Messiah, not to mention the Servant of Isaiah (which in the Targum, the Aramaic translations-cum-explanation of the Hebrew Bible, is identified with the Messiah, although dating is problematic), had been combined all into one, as evidenced by the Similitudes of Enoch. We hope to show that Jesus, in his preaching and activity, acts like the Messiah of the End Time, as well as “eschatological agent” of God’s Kingdom. It is much debated whether Jesus spoke of the “Son of Man” always in

¹⁷⁵ In Hebrew, one word can mean both “only” and “darling, beloved.”

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reference to himself, or whether he expected the Son of Man as a different individual to show up on earth after him (e.g., as in Mark 13:26-27).¹⁷⁶ We do not have to take a position on this question here, but if Jesus forgave sins and interpreted Torah in a manner that went behind Moses, as he certainly seems to have done, I maintain that there was no room or need in his “theology” for a further, and presumably greater and more definitive, redeemer figure than he himself. We cannot in these pages make the whole argument, but I hope what follows will locate Jesus more fully in the definitive, eschatological scenario.

After this baptismal experience, Jesus went into the desert to meditate. It seems that he now saw himself in a mission role that surpassed anything the Baptist’s “movement,” or continued discipleship with the Baptist, envisioned. While in the desert, who can doubt that he was “tempted” or put to the test there, probably in regards to what being the Messiah entailed. Many expected and clamored for a warrior to finally defeat Israel’s enemies; they certainly had enough biblical texts to support this. Jesus must have been tempted to eschew the suffering role (cf. the prayer in Gethsemane). I do not believe that suffering was a tangential aspect of Jesus’ mission as he understood it. I believe that Jesus identified himself with the Servant of Isaiah, who suffered and carried (expiated) the guilt of others. I think this was what the voice he heard clearly intimated, and I think that it was part of the “messianic package” as delivered to him in his baptism (combining redeemer figures, including the Chosen One and the Servant of Isaiah, as in 1 Enoch); see Luke 12:49-50, where there is reference both to the purification by fire the world needs and to Jesus’ “baptism” (now understood as his Passion). This may become clearer as we proceed.

Jesus’ Proclamation and Ministry

Jesus’ proclamation. The gist of Jesus’ preaching is most adequately summed up in Mark 1:15. There are five elements here, which might well be expressed in a chiasmic structure.¹⁷⁷ The five elements are:

¹⁷⁶ It is clear that for Mark Jesus is this Son of Man. Our question supposes that Mark writes for his own purposes, and may have composed things which elaborate or modify what Jesus himself may have said. Biblical interpretation is a difficult task, and we will discuss it later on.

¹⁷⁷ “Chiasm,” from the Greek letter *chi*, which is in the form of an X, is a typical form of Semitic composition wherein a central statement is flanked by other, associated phrases which are related to each

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Matt 7:13-14). This is the New Exodus of Second Isaiah into the “Promised Land” (see Heb 11). This is borne out by what follows.

“Believe” is the most important demand in Jesus’ ministry. “Faith” is the Hebrew reliance on God, standing firm, confirming what God has said, trusting and obeying his Word. By this faith Abraham was justified, or declared righteous, Gen 15:6. Israel’s great sin in the Exodus desert was lack of this “faith,” Deut 1:29-46, and it resulted in the Exile of wasted time in the desert wilderness, away from God’s promise.¹⁷⁹ But now is the time of the New Exodus, and this proclamation must be believed.¹⁸⁰

What must be believed is the “Good News,” the term Isa 40:9; 61:1 uses for the final “Exodus,” the eschatological visitation of God to his people, in order to save them; see Luke 1:68.¹⁸¹ For Second Isaiah, the time of punishment was over, Israel had already paid double for her sins (Isa 40:1-2).¹⁸² So, if we were to detect a chiasmic structure in Mark 1:15, the “time fulfilled” element corresponds to the “Good News of the Final Exodus”/no-more-waiting element. The “Kingdom has drawn near” must be believed (elements b and b¹ in the chiasm). The pivot in the center is the double-duty “return,” meaning both “repent” and “return to the Land” (= “enter-the-sphere-of-salvation”). The first meaning of “return” (repent) is the condition necessary for “return” in the second sense (salvation); the form of behavior one should “convert” to will be discussed shortly (the “ethics of the Kingdom”).

Now we shall see what forms this “eschatological visitation” of God took in the ministry of Jesus. There are three aspects of Jesus’ ministry that I want to focus on, and that in some sense can sum it up: the eschatological ingathering, the signs of the Kingdom or “works of the Messiah,” and the “new Teaching (with dominion).”

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Deut 2:14 and John 5:5-14.

¹⁸⁰ The “Suffering Servant” is linked to this New Exodus of Second Isaiah, and the report about him must be believed; see Isa 53:1; John 12:37-41.

¹⁸¹ “Visitation” can also have a connotation of judgment: salvation for those who obey God, condemnation for those who do not; see Luke 19:46.

¹⁸² This message of consolation of Second Isaiah is qualified by Third Isaiah, who must deal with the question of why the “New Exodus,” in the sense of eschatological, final salvation (or, as the Germans call it, the *Endtheophanie*), has not taken place: it is being prevented by the people’s sins. What distinguishes Second from Third Isaiah is that for the latter, a new kind of judgment must take place, one that will divide true Israel from the ones who are wicked and do not obey God; this new (or additional) judgment must precede the promised restoration; see SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 127, 139, 143. This is a “radical transformation,” as Israel is now defined not by birthright, but by proper adherence to Yahweh’s cult, 158; cf. John 1:11-13; Rom 9:6-8; Phil 3:3.

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The eschatological ingathering. Essential to the notion of Exile is Dispersion, which is the word used of God’s punishment in driving the people out of the Land. In Greek, this is the word “Diaspora.” And so, essential to the image (and reality) of salvation is ingathering, expressed as the reunification of the Twelve Tribes in Ezek 37:15-28 (just before the beginning of the eschatological section of Ezek).¹⁸³ This is the meaning behind Jesus’ gathering of the Twelve disciples or “apostles,” a firm historical datum. But the Davidic servant-prince in Ezek 34 also gathers the stray sheep unattended by the leaders of Israel, healing them after seeking them out like a shepherd, and making them lie down to pasture (eat), and protecting them from the evil beasts. He also confronts the “fat ones,” and judges between them. This is all part of an eschatological peace scenario leading up to Ezek 36, where the Garden of Eden is mentioned as part of the new world which shall arise when God purifies his people and gives them a new, obedient heart.¹⁸⁴ In a similar passage, Jer 23:1-8 talks of David’s righteous “Sprout” (or “Branch”), a messianic term, who is a “prudent” (*hiskil*, from the same verb as in Isa 52:13 and the *maskilim*) king who shall save Judah in a new Exodus which will make one forget the first Exodus.¹⁸⁵

Jesus had (perhaps hosted) many meals with “lost sheep” (the word in Hebrew came to mean “excommunicated”). He was sent to these “stray sheep” of the House of Israel, Matt 10:6. These were the “sinners” looked down upon by observant Jews (especially Pharisees; the rabbis would call them “people of the land,” *am ha-arets* in Hebrew; cf. John 7:47-49). The scene in Mark 2:15-17, even if redactional (reflecting Mark’s own composition), surely was typical of what Jesus did: they are at meal, reclining in the Jewish festive manner (see Mark 2:18-22; it is eschatological wedding time!), and so, enacting the scene with the sheep at pasture in Ezek 34:15. The talk about those who are ill and need a physician echoes Ezek 34:16, with its seeking out the stray and healing terminology. So Jesus is ingathering Israel, an eschatological expectation associated with the Messianic, Davidic shepherd. This was one of Jesus’ most significant

¹⁸³ Cf. Jas 1:1. See Ps 107:2-3 for the juxtaposition of redemption and ingathering.

¹⁸⁴ Note that the Promised Land itself is described in paradisiacal terms in such texts as Jer 2:7; 3:19; Zech 7:14, and that the punishment, or the result of the people’s sins, is a return to chaos and uncreation, cf. Zeph 1:2-3; Jer 4:23.

¹⁸⁵ On “Sprout,” see also Jer 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12; cf. Isa 11:1-9 (different word for “branch” in v. 1), a major “return to Eden” passage (vegetarian lions, harmless vipers, etc.!).

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“messianic” activities, certainly part of the reason for his following. These meals could take on a more “cosmic” character, in ways which are hard to visualize now. In John 6:1-15, the fourth gospel’s version of the feeding of the multitude, at the end the people acclaim Jesus as the “eschatological prophet” (of Deut 18:15, and thus, as a sort of new Moses) and want to make him king (Messiah). One can see how the religious leadership of Israel would look askance at Jesus: the Pharisees would resent his breaking the very boundaries between pure and impure that they so strove to inculcate; the more worldly and conservative Sadducees would be very nervous about messianic uprisings (see John 11:47-54).

The “signs of the Kingdom,” or the “works of the Messiah.” The “messianic age” (I put the words in quotation marks because an actual “Messiah” may not be part of some such scenarios) was expected to bring healing and forgiveness. In fact, these two things are closely related, as modern psychology can attest. The text of Isa 6:10 (in both the Hebrew and Greek versions) says “lest they turn and I *heal* them,” while the Targum (the Aramaic explanatory translation) and Mark 4:12 both have “lest they turn and I *forgive* them.” In John 5:14, Jesus suggests that the long-lying paralytic had brought his illness on himself. In the episode of the woman with a long-standing blood-flow, the Greek text (not always apparent in translation) alternates “save” and “heal;” in Mark 5:28, the woman says she will be saved (presumably only from her illness—although this condition, which rendered her childless, was tantamount to death; cf. Judg 11:37) if only she can touch Jesus’ cloak; when she does so, she is described as cured, 5:29; in the end, she has been *saved* by her faith and *healed* of her malady, 5:34, and can go in peace.

Texts attributed to Second and Third Isaiah speak of “miracles” (Hebrew speaks rather of “signs,” as in the gospel of John) which will take place in the Messianic Age. Isa 35:5-6 say that the blind will see, the lame shall walk and the deaf shall hear. Isa 26:19 says that the dead shall awaken.¹⁸⁶ We have all heard of Jesus’ miracles in this regard; there can be no doubt that Jesus was known as a healer, and there are even precedents in the Hebrew Bible for raising one at least presumed to be dead, 2 Kgs 4:18-

¹⁸⁶ We should here take the opportunity to note that behind Jesus’ meals many have seen the “messianic banquet” of Isa 25:6-8, which, like Isa 26:19, is in the “Apocalypse of Isaiah” (Isa 24-27).

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37.¹⁸⁷ A key text to understand this as the “works of the Messiah” is Matt 11:2-6, where, in fact, the Baptist, in prison, has heard of “the works of the Christ (“Christ” is the Greek version of the Hebrew “Messiah”).¹⁸⁸ These works are listed in terms similar to those in Isa 26 and 35. Lepers were not part of that scenario; this may just be an area where Jesus exceeded expectations (no man could heal a leper, see 2 Kgs 5:7), but it could also be related to “purification,” a topic which we will discuss shortly. The other component of Matt 11:2-6 is the reference to Isa 61:1, the passage about the Prophet-Messiah anointed by the Spirit who preaches Good News to the humble (*‘anawîm*, often translated “poor,” as in the LXX). So Jesus is bringing about healings and well-being, which are related to forgiveness, as part of the signs that the Kingdom of God has drawn near; see Matt 12:25-28; Luke 11:20.¹⁸⁹

This brings us to Jesus’ exorcisms (note the connection between illness and Satan in Luke 13:16). These have been held (i.e., by the prominent E.P. Sanders) not to have been expected of the Messiah (Sanders says there were far too many of them for this to be the case!). Zech 13:1-6, a late passage as we have seen, speaks of a day when there shall be a cleansing fountain to wash away sin and impurity; on “that day” (an eschatological term), idols and prophets and unclean spirits will be no more.¹⁹⁰ Jesus was certainly known for his exorcisms. Here we must interpret this activity within the context of his eschatological ministry, so that it is more difficult to separate history from theology; our sources, the gospels, have so mixed the two that I think it would be pointless (as well as impossible and unnecessary) to attempt to view Jesus’ exorcisms while trying to set aside the theological presentations of them in the gospels (especially

¹⁸⁷ Jesus’ raising of the dead all involve one who has at most recently died, with the exception of Lazarus, which we will have occasion to say something about.

¹⁸⁸ This passage suggests the historical reality that Jesus’ leaving John the Baptist’s discipleship (and probably taking some of the Baptist’s disciples with him, John 1:35-36; cf. 4:1; 10:40-42) may not have been a totally smooth separation. John continued to minister in his way, and into the time of the early Church some had heard only of his baptism, Acts 18:25; 19:1-4. The two movements (those of Jesus and John) differ in lifestyles: John’s disciples fast, Jesus’ do not (Mark 2:18-22; cf. Matt 11:18-19). Jesus, however, relies on the validity of the Baptist’s eschatological ministry, which started it all for him, in his dispute with the religious leaders, Mark 11:27-33. When I say that the separation may not have been “totally smooth,” I mean that John seems to not understand (or perhaps even agree with) Jesus’ ministry, Matt 11:2-3. Jesus, on the other hand, has high praise for John, Matt 11:7-15. There is no doubt, however that there is a sharp division between the time of the Law and the Prophets as the time of expectation, and the time of the Kingdom, which is that of the Good News of liberation, Matt 11:13; Luke 16:16.

¹⁸⁹ Note that in the gospels, Jesus is the “stronger one” who binds Satan; cf. Mark 1:7; 3:27; 5:4.

¹⁹⁰ Note that “clean” and “pure” and “to cleanse” and “to purify” are identical terms as used herein.

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Mark’s). So with this caveat or disclaimer, we proceed to our third topic in the eschatological ministry of Jesus, his “new teaching.”

Jesus’ “new teaching.” The beginning Bible student may wonder what the connection between exorcisms and “teaching” (old or new!) may be. It is clear that the final defeat of evil was an eschatological expectation in many like-minded Jewish circles in the Second Temple period. We have seen biblical texts that spoke of purification and the new heart (Ezek 36), of the end of sin (Zech 14; one could add, e.g., Isa 60:19-21) and evil spirits (Zech 13:1-2), of evil beasts (Dan 7; Ezek 34:28; 36:29-35), in a type of return to Eden (Isa 11:1-9). Jesus is depicted as the “strong one” who destroys evil spirits (Mark 1:24), who bound Satan (Mark 3:22-30), to deny which is the unforgivable sin.¹⁹¹ Jesus himself, in what appears to be an apocalyptic vision, saw Satan fall from the sky, Luke 10:18. So this is clearly a sign of God’s eschatological victory, or the beginning of it.

Jesus calms the sea in Mark 4:39 using exorcism commands exactly like those in Mark 1:25. The sea was the realm of chaos which God had tamed in creation. From it arose Daniel’s evil beasts, which had turned topsy-turvy God’s original creation plan (that Adam dominate over the beasts). After creation, God had repented of having created and had sent the Flood, but evil had continued and multiplied, and God had seemed to fall asleep. Certain circles awaited a new purification, a definitive one, this time with fire (recall the discussion of 1 Enoch, above). But God now seemed so distant that even prophets had become extinct, for hundreds of years now, according to late Second Period chronology.

Isa 51:9-11 summons Yahweh to *wake up*, to repeat what he did at creation, when he slew the sea monsters! To repeat what he did in the first Exodus, when he parted the sea. Note the parallel between this passage and Jesus sleeping in the boat before he “exorcizes” the sea, Mark 4:37-38. Jesus’ exorcisms represent God’s finally “waking up”

¹⁹¹ Jesus’ exorcisms as presented in *crescendo* in Mark 1:23-26; 3:11; 5:1-20; this last exorcism, of “Legion,” involves the highest confession of Jesus as Son of the Most High God. The eschatological priest in the “Old Testament pseudepigrapha,” *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, Testament of Levi 18:10-11 was expected to bind “Beliar” (Satan); cf. Mark 3:27. For the importance of evil or unclean spirits in the Qumran literature, see PAUL J. KOBELSKI, *Melchizedek and Melchireša* (Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 10; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1981) see pages 4 and 45 on Belial (variant of Beliar). See also MARINUS DE JONGE – A.S. VAN DER WOUDE, “11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament,” *New Testament Studies* 12 (1965-1966), 306, 310 footnote 5, 314, 316.

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and acting again, as he did in creation. This will be the final, new creation. The waiting period was over.

Many of these ideas I have taken from the remarkable work of the late Harmut Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran*, cited above.¹⁹² For this great scholar, Jesus’ activity—symbolizing and effectuating God’s eschatological redemption— meant that what the Jewish Scriptures announced and prepared for was being fulfilled.¹⁹³ God was at work again to save, and the goal of the Jewish Scriptures was being fulfilled. Things were returning to their pre-Fall state, before evil and impurity came into the world (at least for those who were entering God’s Kingdom). For Stegemann, this represents a going back to the pre-Fall Torah, to Gen 1-2, which then relativizes, or ‘totally changes’, the rest of the Torah.¹⁹⁴ Jesus is cleansing lepers and healing women with blood-flows, thereby rendering the Temple sacrificial system superfluous (sacrifices were offered after the afflicted person somehow got well—not by any cultic act!— in order to reinstate him or her into the cultic community). From his exorcisms and healings, “Jesus inferred that, in the current event of the Reign of God, the restoration of the order of creation that had prevailed before the Fall was occurring;”¹⁹⁵

Jesus can critique the “post-Fall Torah” as having been necessary due to what can only be considered to be a temporary “hardness of heart.” “In the Beginning it was not so,” says Jesus when asked about divorce (Jewish parties at the time did not question divorce, only the grounds for it).¹⁹⁶ In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus seems to be giving a “new Torah” (remember that “Torah” first of all means [priestly] “teaching, instruction, doctrine”).¹⁹⁷ In Mark 7:14-23, Jesus is said to cleanse (or declare clean; it is the same

¹⁹² Here, see especially pages 251-257. However, I am offering up my own interpretation of Jesus’ eschatological ministry, and not simply following everything that Stegemann writes.

¹⁹³ This is the meaning of Matt 5:17-19, although this very Jewish gospel has enigmatic statements regarding what Torah-observance entails (see, e.g., Matt 23:1-3).

¹⁹⁴ I myself would stress that the main purpose of most of the Torah was to separate Israel from idolaters, idolatry and impurity (obstacles to worship and obedience of the true God), and that, with Jesus, true worship of the true God is being opened for all, starting with the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Cf. STEGEMANN, *The Library of Qumran*, 253-255.

¹⁹⁵ STEGEMANN, *The Library of Qumran*, 253.

¹⁹⁶ See Mark 10:1-12. Matt 19:9’s seeming exception for *porneia*, usually translated “sexual immorality” (but it is not the word for adultery!) is probably a reference to illicit unions which are not valid marriages and which should, by all means, be discontinued. The issue of divorce as viewed at Qumran is less clear to me at this time.

¹⁹⁷ Some posit a five-book division in Matt. For discussions of how a “new or other Torah” could have existed (or been understood) in Judaism, see W.D. DAVIES, *Torah in the Messianic Age and/or Age to*

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difference) all foods. Separation between Israel and the nations, or between the Israel that is pure and the Israel which is not, in order to protect the pure monotheistic faith (which is the rationale for the Mosaic Torah), is no longer necessary in the time of the Kingdom for those who are being recreated as they enter it.¹⁹⁸ Likewise Paul, who proclaims “a new creation in Christ” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), goes behind the Mosaic covenant (*b^erith*) to the Abrahamic Promise (also *b^erith*), Gal 3:16-18.

At this point, we should briefly describe the “ethics of the Kingdom.” Jesus experienced God as finally starting the eschatologically-awaited salvation of Israel (and implicitly, of the whole world). God had “awoken,” as Isa 51:9-11 had pleaded, and this meant that God was working again as he had done in creation (the New Exodus announced in Dt-Isa was also conceived as a new creation; cf. 65:17). The pre-Fall conditions of Paradise were to prevail, after the struggles of the Kingdom were over (see Matt 11:12, a difficult text transmitted differently in Luke 16:16). No more violence (the pre-Noachic food laws, for example, contemplated vegetarianism, cf. Gen 1:9-10 and 9:3-6), but, more practically, God was ingathering his people, he was offering them forgiveness of sins, a place at the messianic feast.¹⁹⁹ Matt in particular emphasizes that God is our “heavenly Father” and that we are all brothers; God rains on just and unjust alike, Matt 5:43-48. We are to love our enemies, as God has accepted his enemies, those who did not do his will prior to their turning to him; cf. Rom 15:7.²⁰⁰

Come (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1952), esp. 70-74; see also the index in his *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism. Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler Press, 1948, 1955, 180, 1998); DAVID DAUBE, “*ἐξουσία* in MARK I 22 and 27,” *Journal of Theological Studies* XXXIX (1938), 52-59; Daube is a great scholar of rabbinics, but his treatment of Jesus’ “new teaching” in Mark 1:22, 27 is extremely poor, as we hope to demonstrate. See also Daube’s *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Peabody: Hendrikson, 1956; 1998 printing), 212-216. Recall that in “advanced,” or at least, somewhat dissident, circles such as those behind the Enoch literature, there may have been “other Torahs,” and thus the five-book composition of 1 Enoch. Texts such as Jer 7:21-23 reflect, according to Richard Friedman, the competing *torot* (plural of *torah*) of different and opposed priestly groups.

¹⁹⁸ Mark 7:19 may not go back to the historical Jesus, but may well be a gloss (explanation by the evangelist or a redactor). Luke presents things as having taken place much more gradually in Acts 10 (as is Luke’s custom in accordance with his theological style).

¹⁹⁹ See footnote 64 above.

²⁰⁰ If any sect of Judaism taught hatred of enemies (seen as enemies of God), it was that of Qumran. The wall of separation between Jew and Gentile established by Torah to preserve Israel pure from idolatry is called in Eph 2:14-15 a “wall of hatred or enmity” which Christ has broken down, abolishing in his flesh the commandments of the Torah. Analogously to Jesus’ “ethics of the Kingdom,” SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 119, says that “Isa. 56.1 expresses the conviction that ethical conduct is determined by eschatological expectation,” footnote omitted. Jesus’ prayer for the forgiveness of his executioners in Luke 23:34 is considered to be unique in the Bible (cf. Acts 7:60).

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God is active again in the world, and his proximity, as manifested by Jesus’ signs of the Kingdom, should give us great confidence (faith) that God will take care of us; his providential hand is evident in nature, in the flowers of the field and in the little sparrows, Matt 6:25-34; Luke 12:6-7. God’s great rival is money, Matt 6:24; 1 Tim 6:10; Heb 13:5. Only one person called to follow Jesus refuses, the “rich young man.” Jesus in Luke 14:33 says that discipleship requires renouncing one’s right to one’s property.²⁰¹ As an illustration of Jesus’ teaching, remarkably geared to surprise and shock (the Kingdom is like a man who throws his valuable seeds all over the place, or who pays his workers the same no matter how much they worked, and God is like an Oriental patriarch who runs to meet his profligate son), let us look at Luke 6:36-38. Using Semitic rhetorical analysis (which I learned from Prof. Roland Meynet, S.J. at the Gregorian University in Rome), this passage would be in *crescendo*, spiraling upwards in ever-increasing intensity:

Be compassionate, as your Father is compassionate;
do not “judge” [= sue a debtor], and you will not be “judged” [sued by God],²⁰²
do not “condemn” [= obtain a judgment against your debtor], and you will
not be condemned [by God, who will respond in kind],²⁰³
dismiss [the lawsuit], and you will be dismissed [as a defendant];
give, and it shall be given to you:²⁰⁴
a good measure, pressed down, shake, running over
...

The whole world, as the Thomistic tradition teaches, is God’s (Ps 24:1; 1 Cor 10:26), and belongs to all, to apportion and distribute as best meets the fulfillment of the *common good*; see the (idealistic) description of the early Church in Acts 4:34-35. The only Christian description of the final judgment is in Matt 25:31-46 (we have already mentioned certain affinities it has with 1 Enoch); the criterion for “salvation” is meeting the physical and emotional needs of the needy, not proper confession of faith; cf. Matt

²⁰¹ Cf. Paul’s radical renunciation of his right (*exousia*) to a wife, to a salary for his preaching and to eating meat in living in 1 Cor 9:4-12, 8:13. In 2 Cor 8:14-15, Paul says that equality should reign, rather than gross economic differences between people. See also 2 Cor 9, a great mini-special collection homily.

²⁰² Cf. Matt 18:23-35. The Lukan version of the Lord’s Prayer has “sins” for what God forgives us, and “debts” for what we forgive others. The Matthean version uses the Aramaic “debts” in both instances.

²⁰³ See Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; our Jubilee, eschatological forgiveness depends on our first having forgiven our debtors (in every sense).

²⁰⁴ Give to your debtor; he is poor, that is why he could not pay you!

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7:21-23; “iniquity” here, *anomia* (“lawlessness”) is what will increase in the last days, Matt 24:12, through lack of love.

Now we can go to the passage which founds our subtitle “Jesus’ ‘new teaching’.” It is Mark 1:27. After Jesus has performed his first “miracle,” the exorcism of the man with the unclean spirit who protested that Jesus had come to destroy “us,” “everyone” was astonished and describes the exorcism as “a new teaching according to dominion; he commands the unclean spirits and they obey him” (like the sea in Mark 4:41).²⁰⁵ Jesus, in Mark 1:22, at the beginning of the pericope (= passage, or scriptural unit), is said to teach with *exousía*, and not like the scribes (the people are “amazed,” as they are at the end of the unit, 1:27). Now this word is usually translated “authority,” but this can mislead: one can easily think that this means that Jesus spoke as if he knew what he was talking about, or with more conviction or eloquence than the scribes. And, like so many things in Mark and in Scripture, this kind of interpretation may well hold, on a surface reading (at a superficial level). But *exousía* comes from Dan 7:14 (see the discussion above), and denotes the plenipotentiary (full authority) that Jesus has as the Son of Man. It goes well beyond great speaking or teaching; it is a dominion (the translation of the Aramaic *shaltan* and the Greek *exousía* in Dan 7:14) based on God’s dominion (also referred to in Dan, and given to whomever God wills) now at work in the End Time. It is the dominion of the Kingdom, which is given to the Son of Man, here understood no longer as the original collectivity (“the saints of the Most High,” as in Dan 7:18, 27), but as an individual. One may dispute if Jesus could have spoken of himself historically in these terms. We have said that things can be quite blurry in this regard, but add that, increasingly, the historical skepticism, late dating, etc. regarding what is said in the Bible is giving way to surprising discoveries and interpretations that show that however much the biblical text is theological, the historical “kernel” on which it is based may be growing before our eyes like the mustard seed of the Kingdom.

One passage can illustrate this issue regarding the Son of Man. It is Mark 2:1-12, the story of the paralytic lowered through the roof. The scene itself seems real enough.

²⁰⁵ I owe this understanding of Mark 1:27 to the book of a scholar with whom I agree very little, BURTON L. MACK, *A Myth of Innocence. Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 233-235. On the topic of “dominion” (in Greek, *exousía*) in Mark, and many other aspects of our discussion here, see EMILIO G. CHÁVEZ, *The Theological Significance of Jesus’ Temple Action in Mark’s Gospel* (Lewiston, NY – Queenston, Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002).

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We have stated that healing and forgiveness overlap in the Bible, and especially in the gospels. Like the paralytic in John 5, sin is related to the malady. In Mark 2:5, Jesus forgives the man’s sins, after witnessing “their” faith (whether that of his companions only or also of the paralytic cannot be determined here). The man in John 5 apparently also has faith, or obeys Jesus, upon his command, and is told to sin no more.²⁰⁶ Faith saves, and Jesus can declare sins forgiven (by God, but cf. John 8:11, “neither do I condemn you”). Being healed as a sign of the Kingdom which is entered by “faith” (in the biblical sense, meaning fidelity, trust and obedience, like Abraham’s) results in sins being forgiven; one is ready for the judgment (cf. Matt 11:20-24).

And so Jesus’ “new teaching” is the defeat of evil and impurity. It is like a new Torah which provides access to God, which purifies and allows intimacy with (“knowledge of”) God, an eschatological hope (see Isa 11:9; Jer 31:34; Hos 2:16-22). It is the Torah written in the heart of Jer 31:31-33, in the new heart of the purified people of Ezek 36:24-29 (cf. 2 Cor 3; Rom 7:6). It is the new Torah/Teaching of the new creation God is working through Jesus as his eschatological agent (who, like God the Father, is now at work even on the Sabbath, John 5:17). What the Mosaic Torah (Gen 3-Deut 34, according to Stegemann) did was to prepare Israel for the time of the New Exodus, of salvation, keeping it pure among the nations, witnessing to the true God (although this was never done perfectly nor universally, as even the Church does not follow Jesus perfectly or universally).²⁰⁷ But the new Torah is not really a different Torah; it is the Torah as fulfilled by Jesus; see Luke 24:25-27, 44-46; John 5:39, 46).

But we now have to see how Jesus ushers in this new Torah which he has begun to “teach” with his signs of the Kingdom (of God’s new, eschatological creation). How does one receive this Torah written in the heart, how is one purified and able to obey God in the new, definitive way, how is Jeremiah’s new covenant and circumcision of the heart to take place, when sin is forgiven so that all shall have access to intimacy with God?²⁰⁸ This takes us into the mystery of the Suffering Servant who is also the Son of Man.

²⁰⁶ Cf. the sinful woman in Luke 7:47, whose sins are forgiven due to having loved much; “believing” and “loving” are thus closely related if not identical; see Jas 2:26; Gal 5:6; 1 John 4:7-8, 12, 20.

²⁰⁷ See Gal 3:19-29, on the temporary purpose of the Torah (the “Law”). Cf. Rom 3:21-26; 10:4; John 1:17-18; 6:32-35, 46-51 (“bread” being closely related to God’s Word, Deut 8:3; Amos 8:11; Sir 15:3).

²⁰⁸ Recall such texts as Ezek 36:24-38; Deut 30:6-14; Jer 31:31-34.

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Jesus’ Passion

Historically, Jesus was executed as a messianic pretender (“King of the Jews”) by the Romans (“under Pontius Pilate”), most probably at the instigation of Jewish religious leaders, probably priests.²⁰⁹ Jesus had a significant following among the Jewish general population, and would have been looked upon with sympathy (see, e.g., Mark 11:18; 12:12; 14:2). Had there not been such support, no one would have bothered with Jesus, not even the ruthless, probably anti-Judaic Pontius Pilate. It is clear that the gospels massively play down the Roman role in Jesus’ execution, presenting Pilate as weak. But Pilate was so ruthless against the Jews that he was removed for this reason, and was known to execute many even without trial.²¹⁰ In the period when the gospels were written, the great rival and adversary of Christianity were the Jews, the majority of whom had not accepted Jesus as Messiah. A theological controversy with these Jews colors the Passion accounts.²¹¹ The first gospel, Mark, was written probably around the time that the Jewish revolt against Rome was starting, or perhaps was just over (66-70 C.E.), and probably in Rome. In any case, already in 64 C.E. the Christians were unpopular enough in Rome to have been blamed by the emperor Nero for the great fire that destroyed much of the city (and that many thought Nero himself had started).²¹² During this time Peter and Paul were martyred, by the Romans, and a great persecution led to the deaths of many Roman Christians (there was great rivalry and bitterness between Jews and

²⁰⁹ John’s gospel seems most historical in presenting discussions among the Jewish leaders (11:47-50), followed by the more immediate interrogations at the house of the high priest before handing Jesus over to Pilate, 18:12-28. Note that in John the Romans are already in on Jesus’ arrest, 18:3, 12.

²¹⁰ See the description of his prefecture by Father Fitzmyer in *NJBC* 75:168. Pharisees are mostly out of the Passion narratives, and it is unclear how many of them were in the Sanhedrin at that time. Jesus’ lethal enemies are said to have been the “high priests.” In Luke 13:31-32, some Pharisees seem to warn Jesus that Herod Antipas seeks to kill him. Jesus calls Herod “that fox;” this gives us an idea of how prophets like Jesus antagonized, or at least, provoked, authorities with their language, and makes us realize that religion and politics were inseparable in that time and culture; see Matt 23:13-36. They are still inseparable, it just depends what kind of religion (e.g., one limited to things of the individual soul, possible only where all bodily needs are met) and what kind of politics (e.g., one where the only moral issues have to do with sex, while war, poverty and the planet are simply left in the hands of “trusted” leaders). Note that Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.5.2 (116-119), says John the Baptist was killed because Herod feared his preaching would start an insurrection. See Matt/Luke 3:7; cf. the famous account of his martyrdom after a dance in Mark 6:17-29.

²¹¹ The Passion accounts are also full of references to Scriptures (Old Testament) which are being fulfilled; note that Jesus’ disciples do not understand the Scriptures in this way until Easter: Luke 24:25-27; John 2:22; 12:16.

²¹² Not to mention the expulsion of Christians from Rome under Claudius, in 49; see Acts 18:2.

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“Messianic Jews” in Rome). Now, Christians were a Jewish sect who followed a crucified “Messiah:” that he was crucified was certain, that he was considered a messiah, equally clear. This made the Christians enemies of the Roman state. Jews in general were not well looked upon, but were protected in the practice of their faith due to its ancient origins (which Romans respected). Once Christians separate out from Judaism, or are expelled from the synagogue (see John 9:22, 34), they lost this protection of tolerance. So, without adhering to the disputed views of S.G.F. Brandon in *Jesus and the Zealots*, we can say that the evangelists had strong apologetic (and prudential) motives to paint a historically-incredible Pontius Pilate and a Jewish crowd who seems to turn on Jesus overnight; see Mark 15:11.

But what kind of “Messiah” had Jesus been?²¹³ Jesus had exercised a “messianic” ministry, evident especially in the ingathering of Israel as the shepherd of such passages as Jer 23:1-8 and Ezek 34. Note that in Ezek, the messianic shepherd is a “prince” and not a “king” (though cf. Ezek 37:24). Likewise, no one should proclaim himself “messiah;” this God should do, by giving him victory.²¹⁴ Jesus had mandated secrecy regarding his messiahship during his ministry, but now, as things came to a head with his confrontations with the “bad shepherds” in Jerusalem (see Mark 12:1-12), Jesus did not back down from his role, though he mostly kept his mouth shut during the interrogation at his trial; Mark 14:60-61; 15:2-5; cf. Luke 23:9; Jer 11:19; Isa 53:7; the pious Jews did not defend himself—he might not be innocent after all—but waited to see if God would defend him.

Jesus could have defended himself (he seems to do so in John 18:20-23, 33-37), and could have left the jurisdiction. We have stated at the outset that Jesus’ initial “messianic” experience at his baptism (“you are my beloved Son”) was joined or combined with the mission of the Isaianic Servant, destined to suffer and carry the sins of

²¹³ The gospels present the following irony: Jesus, the true Son of God, was executed as a false messiah (insurgent), while Barabbas, a false “son of the father” (that is what his name means in Aramaic), but a true insurgent, is released.

²¹⁴ Thus Bar-Kochba (proclaimed Messiah by the great Rabbi Akiva) called himself “prince” (*nasi*) in the revolt of 132-135; see CHÁVEZ, *Theological Significance*, 23, fn. 53. Note that the expectations of Jesus’ disciples prior to Easter are very “worldly,” that is, typically Jewish as depicted in the Hebrew Bible. Note that two of his “main” disciples want special places in his Kingdom, Mark 10:35-40; note that Mark has “glory” instead of the certainly original “Kingdom” in Matt 20:21 (but Matt softens the episode by blaming their mother!).

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others (“many”). We also know that the *maskîlîm* (“wise teachers”) in Dan 11:35; 12:3, 10 were to be purified through suffering in their role as “justifying (or making righteous)” “many,” as the Servant is said to do in Isa 53:11. The *maskîlîm* are following in the Servant’s footsteps, perhaps also expiating for the Land and for others as the Qumranites saw themselves doing. Here the “one like a son of man” who receives the Kingdom of Dan 7 would seem to be related to these *maskîlîm*, and thus a text like Mark 10:45, where Servant and Son of Man are combined into an individual, Jesus, who comes to give his life as a ransom for “many,” could well have come from Jesus’ own mouth. In addition, pious Jews expected a final putting to the test, “temptation,” before the messianic age came. The tradition would refer to this also as the “birth pangs of the Messiah,” and Jesus speaks of this in John 16:21; cf. Rev 12:1-6. All this, coupled with purification texts like Wis 3:5-8 (see the surrounding context, and cf. Matt 27:39-44), and the notion that a father disciplines his child, help understand how Jesus saw his Passion.²¹⁵ Furthermore, there was a tradition that true prophets were killed, and Jesus saw himself as last in the line of the Prophets (who had prophesied the messianic age or Kingdom which Jesus was inaugurating); see Mark 12:1-12; Luke 13:31-35.

One last word about Jesus’ possible self-understanding regarding his Passion. Jesus had been baptized by John in the Jordan, symbolizing the new and final Exodus. He had heard the heavenly voice proclaim him Son and Servant. Jesus was thus aware that he still had a different kind of “baptism” and exodus to accomplish; see Luke 12:50; Mark 10:38.²¹⁶ Thus, the final Exodus would require his Passion, as Luke’s Transfiguration scene indicates (Luke 9:31 has “exodus” in Greek, at times translated “departure”).²¹⁷

²¹⁵ “Divine discipline,” in Hebrew *mûsar*, in Greek *paideia*, is found in Isa 53:5 (“the discipline [*mûsar*] of our salvation [*shalôm*] upon him;” Ps 16:7 (verb), cited in Acts 2:22-28. Jesus struggled with this mission to suffer (cf. Isa 53:4-6, 10), as reflected in Gethsemane (another passage the evangelists would not have made up) and in Heb 5:5-10; cf. 12:5-12 (*paideia*).

²¹⁶ One of the ancient images for a terrible trial is the “water (or river) ordeal,” a being put to the test. The psalm considered to be the “most quarried” for material to illustrate Jesus’ Passion, Ps 69, begins with such an ordeal.

²¹⁷ Some scholars have seen in John 3:14; 12:32 (regarding Jesus’ being “lifted up”) a reference to crucifixion going back to an early, Aramaic tradition and probably to Jesus himself. “To be lifted up” in fact in Aramaic (but not in Greek or Hebrew) can mean both “to be exalted” (like the Servant in Isa 52:13) and “to be crucified.” “Being lifted up” as a reference to crucifixion occurs with some frequency in Qumran. In Aramaic, see Ezra 6:11; cf. Deut 21:22-23; Esth 7:10; 9:13; the targum (Aramaic translation) of 1 Chr 10:10.

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Later on, we will have occasion to flesh out the theological understanding of Jesus’ Passion by briefly looking at how the New Testament, especially Mark and Hebrews, understand the significance of Jesus’ sacrifice.

The Early Church

Preliminary remarks. We divided Jesus’ ministry into three aspects, the eschatological ingathering, the signs of the Kingdom or of the Messianic Age, and Jesus’ new “Teaching” with dominion. Now we will see three correlative aspects of the early Church, only in inverse order: Jesus’ resurrection, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the mission to the Gentiles. The pivot between these two sets of three is the Passion (3 + 1 + 3 = 7). The resurrection corresponds to Jesus’ dominion (*exousía*), which is that of the Son of Man (an expression used by Jesus in his Passion predictions).²¹⁸ The outpouring of the Holy Spirit as sign of the messianic End Time clearly corresponds to the “signs of the Kingdom and of the Messiah,” and obviously the mission to the Gentiles corresponds to the ingathering of the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” We can diagram it as a concentric or chiasmic presentation as follows:

- (a) Jesus’ eschatological in-gathering
- (b) the signs of the Kingdom or of the messianic age
- (c) Jesus’ New Teaching with *exousía*

- (d) Jesus’ Passion

- (c¹) Jesus’ resurrection
- (b¹) the gift of the Spirit
- (a¹) the mission to the Gentiles

The resurrection of Jesus. There is no Church without the resurrection. Jesus’ disciples expected an earthly kingdom, and prominent roles in it; see Matt 19:27-28; Luke 22:28-30. Thus, after the crucifixion (during which “they all fled,” Mark 14:50),

²¹⁸ All the connections between Son of God, Son of Man, Jesus’ *exousía*, new Teaching, Passion, etc. are more fully discussed in CHÁVEZ, *The Theological Significance*. Below, we will cover this more complex topic a bit more when we briefly discuss Mark.

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they were dejected, disappointed at the failure of Jesus to have brought messianic liberation to Israel, Luke 24:13-21; cf. Acts 1:6). But Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to Simon Peter and the Twelve, and to many others; 1 Cor 15:3-8. This is the earliest account, or list, of the resurrection; the stories of women at the empty tomb would not have been the earliest, official statements (women were not considered to be very reliable in that society).

The resurrection was proof to the disciples of Jesus’ victory as “suffering Messiah.” This was extremely unexpected (it is commonly said that in no case was the Jewish Messiah supposed to suffer, although this may have to be nuanced or qualified). One could not combine two more opposed things than “Messiah” and “crucified;” being crucified was a curse, Gal 3:13. But as risen from the dead (also unexpected, since the resurrection would be a collective act, see Dan 12:2; Jesus was the “first-fruits,” 1 Cor 15:20), Jesus was recognized as Son of God in a unique way (Rom 1:4), and as “Lord” (in Greek, *kyrios*, a title used for emperors and applied to Yahweh in the LXX, though this may have been a Christian practice).²¹⁹ This is the early proclamation (*kerygma*) of the Church, Acts 2:36; Phil 2:5-11; faith in Jesus brings salvation, Acts 4:12.

The risen Christ (“Christ” is Greek for the Hebrew “Messiah;” the early Church would rapidly adopt Greek as its language, a sign of its separation from Judaism) is the new, eschatological Adam, who obeyed God and submitted to God’s plan instead of trying to usurp divine prerogatives like the first Man; this is the meaning of the “Christological Hymn” in Phil 2:5-11 (with Suffering Servant allusions). This new Adam gives us a new kind of life which the old Adam had utterly frustrated by his sin (which had brought death); cf. Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:45.²²⁰ In baptism, we die with Christ in order to be raised with him, Rom 6:1-11; we are, like him, a new creation, 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15, or at least being transformed into one, 2 Cor 3:18; cf. 1 Cor 15:51-52. We are the body of Christ, incorporated into him, 1 Cor 12:12-27.²²¹

²¹⁹ The gospel of Mark proclaims Jesus as Son of God from the beginning, but this was known only to God the Father and to demons until Jesus dies as he does on the cross, and the first human can then realize who he was, Mark 15:39.

²²⁰ Christ the new Adam will be in Paradise, Luke 23:43, and may be its Gardener, like the first Adam in Gen 2:8, 15, John 20:15 (“misunderstandings” in the Bible are usually deliberate, especially in John; see also Mark 14:58; 15:29 (Mark is driving home a point).

²²¹ I fancy that Paul’s inaugural vision of the risen Lord (in his “conversion;” the meaning of this term must be explained), in Acts 9:5, 17, 27 (cf. 1 Cor 9:1; 2 Cor 12:2-4; Gal 1:15-16) was of a huge man, a colossus.

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It is the resurrection of Jesus which decides everything for the Christian (see 1 Cor 15:14-19). It is the resurrection that is the starting point for the Christian, from which he or she then reads the Scriptures in order to understand and contemplate the mystery of God (and not to use them as proof-texts: the Scriptures are susceptible of different interpretations). It is the resurrection which enables us to have access to God in Christ (Rom 4:23-5:2; Heb 9:11-14; 10:19-22). We experience the risen Christ through the testimony of the Apostles, in the Church, in whom testifies the Holy Spirit; cf. John 15:26; 2 Tim 1:14; Rom 8:16.

The Holy Spirit. Like the “messianic entry” into Jerusalem, the gift of the Spirit is an instance of an initial Torah text being reread in the Prophets and then fulfilled in the New Testament.²²² In Num 11:29, Moses wishes that “all the people” could prophesy because Yahweh had given them his Spirit. In Joel 3 (2:28-32 in some Bibles), the prophet predicts that after some unspecified time, God’s Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, so that both men and women of whatever state shall prophesy, amidst great cosmic portents (fire, smoke, as in the great Sinai theophany “on the third day,” Exod 19:16-18). Jesus had promised the Spirit (John 15:26, called the “Promise of my Father” in Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5) after his death and resurrection, and now, “in the last days” (as Luke notes in Acts 2:17, doctoring or tweaking the Joel passage), the Spirit comes down on Pentecost.²²³ Pentecost was the Jewish feast of Weeks (*Shavu’ot*), on the fiftieth day after Passover (thus the Greek name Pentecost, “Fiftieth”). It was like the culmination of the time of celebration after the national liberation feast of Passover, and pilgrims stayed

In mystical Judaism, there is a work called the Shi’ur Qomah which, in order to stress the majesty of God, attributes enormous dimensions to him, like soles which cover the whole universe; see *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (R.J.Z. Werblowsky – G. Wigoder, eds.; New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 638 (St. Augustine, in his Commentary on 1 John, Tract. 7,10 [Office of Readings for Wednesday of the 19th Week in Ordinary Time], rejects this notion). In the Pauline epistles, see Eph 1:22-23; 3:17-19; 4:10, 13-16; Col 1:18-19, 24. There is a provocative reading of 1 Cor 15:6, “then (or afterwards) he appeared over (or above) five hundred brethren,” although *epanō* in this sense requires a genitive, and here we have the dative. But see footnote 309 below.

²²² Gen 49:8-12 is the Oracle of Judah, where Jacob’s blessing of this son predicts that he will, like lion, rule over Israel always, and “when Shiloh comes” (interpreted as referring to the Messianic Age), Judah will tie his donkey (and foal of a donkey, in Hebrew parallelistic composition) to the vine etc. This prophecy is evoked in Zech 9:9 (double mention of the donkey gain) and is fulfilled in the gospels (in Matt 21:1-7, literally on both animals!, in Mark 11:1-6, with inordinate attention paid to tying and untying the beast), in what I have called the “unleashing of the eschatological events.”

²²³ In John 19:30, Jesus upon dying (his Glocification, in John inseparable from his Exaltation) hands over the Spirit, which is received by the disciples in 20:22.

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in Jerusalem from Passover to Pentecost.²²⁴ Note the storm-noise and fire mentioned in Acts 2:1-4. Those who received the Spirit then prophesy, speaking new tongues in what many have seen as the reversal of the dispersion and confusion of tongues in the Tower of Babel episode (just before the call of Abraham and the start, if you will, of “salvation history,” Gen 11).

The Spirit could come upon persons who were preached the Good News, as in Acts 10:44-48; Gal 3:1-5, or when praying, as in Acts 8:15-17. The gifts of the Spirit (in Greek, *charismata*) were the signs, or proof, that one was a new creation in Christ (cf. Heb 2:1-4; Rom 7:6; 2 Cor 5:17; 1 Cor 12:1-11). It is proof of being a child of God, Rom 5:5; 8:14-17), and is the guarantee or seal of salvation after the Final Judgment, 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13-14; 4:30.²²⁵ The first Christians were all Jews who did not immediately think of going to the Gentiles, but once they witnessed that Gentiles, too, received the Spirit, they had no trouble admitting them into their numbers; Acts 10:45; 15:7-11; 19:6.²²⁶

The Holy Spirit, understood thus as the great sign of eschatological deliverance, the gift that allows access to God (Eph 2:18) and as a “seal” keeps us safe in the Day of the Lord, represents the whole hope of Israel: it is the real content of what God had promised, Acts 2:37-39 (in Gal 3:29; 4:6-7, the Promise is that of divine sonship and inheritance).²²⁷

The mission to the Gentiles. Jesus’ mission —this is a proper term, from the Latin “to send;” “to send” was a technical term for commissioning a prophet in the Hebrew Bible— was “only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” Matt 15:24.²²⁸ He probably had contacts with “Gentiles” (from the Latin *gentes*, “peoples or nations,” in Hebrew *goyîm*, in Greek *ethnē*, those who were not Jewish), but they are beyond the confines of his mission. Jesus had enough to do gathering the “lost sheep” of Israel (cf. John 7:35;

²²⁴ In Jewish tradition, Shavu‘ot celebrates the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, or the renewal of the covenant. See SMITH, *The Memoirs of God*, 81, with references to 2 Chr 15:10-14; Jubilees 6:17.

²²⁵ Cf. Rom 4:11.

²²⁶ Note the relation between purification or circumcision of the heart and the Holy Spirit: Col 2:11; Phil 3:3; Acts 7:51; 15:8-9; Mark 1:8. Membership in the people of God in the Old Testament was marked by circumcision, Gen 17, but cf. Jer 9:25-26.

²²⁷ But for Luke, the line between the Holy Spirit and resurrection may blur, related as they are (Rom 8:11); cf. Acts 13:32-33; 24:14-15; 26:4-8.

²²⁸ In Greek, the verb is *apostellō*, whence “apostle” (applied to Jesus in Heb 3:1).

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8:48; 10:16; 11:52; cf. the Q saying in Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34). But his “inclusive” attitude, his acceptance of reprobate Jews (ostracized by the Pharisees and other groups), figured mightily in his eschatological ingathering of the “Twelve Tribes” (cf. Rom 15:7-12).

There were precedents in the Hebrew Bible for the participation, if not inclusion, of Gentiles into God’s people: in Isa 2:2-4, “at the end of the days” all the nations shall come to the Temple of Yahweh to be taught the ways of his Torah, resulting in universal peace. In Zech 8:23, “on that day” ten Gentile men (a *minyán*, a Jewish quorum) will grab a Jew by his cloak and tell him they want to go with him to be with his God. The Servant is to be a light to the nations, Isa 49:6 (applied to Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:46-48). In the late “globalization” passage Isa 19:23-25, there shall be good communications among former archenemies, Assyria, Egypt and Israel, and all three shall be God’s people. But there were also less “democratic” passages, such as Isa 60:10-16, where the Gentiles are to be transporters who will do all the heavy lifting in the restoration of Zion, and Ezek 44:9, where no foreigner, not even residents of Israel, shall enter the Temple (cf. Ezek 47:22-23).

The first Christians were all Jews. Jerusalem was their center, and this church or local assembly was headed by a conservative, observant Jew, James the “brother of the Lord.”²²⁹ Some of these Jewish-Christians were from the Diaspora, called “Hellenists” in Acts 6:1. There was friction between these Jewish-Christians of Greek culture and the Jewish-Christians of Palestinian culture (called “Hebrews” in Acts 6:1). Seven Hellenistic Jewish-Christians were instituted as deacons to serve the “Hellenists.” It was with Hellenistic non-Christian Jews that Stephen engaged in such vigorous debate, which led to his martyrdom, Acts 6:8-15; 7:55-60. Stephen shows himself to be quite radical in his rejection of the Temple; Luke, the author of Acts, has Stephen accused of speaking against the Temple and the Law, and Jesus’ “threat” to the Temple and to the Mosaic

²²⁹ See Gal 1:19; 2:11-14; cf. Acts 15:5-21; 21:17-26. We will touch on whether Jesus had siblings later on. The “Letter of James,” attributed to this brother or relative of Jesus, is a conservative Jewish-Christian document which corrects abuses of the Pauline doctrine of justification through faith and not works, stating that Abraham was justified through works, which perfected his faith, Jas 2:21-26. “This James died for the faith at the hands of the high priest Ananus, shortly before the Jewish revolt (Josephus [*Antiquities*] 20.9.1 [197-203]; for a probably more legendary account, cf. the witness of Hegesippus cited by Eusebius [*Ecclesiastical History*] 4.22.4.

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Law is placed on Stephen’s lips, Acts 6:13-14.²³⁰ After Stephen’s execution, there was a persecution against the Jerusalem church, and the disciples were dispersed. Some went north to Syria, still only preaching to Jews. But some Cypriots and Cyreneans (Jews from these places seem to have been rather “radical,” to judge from their revolts against Rome a few decades later) began to speak also to “Greeks,” announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ.²³¹ This was momentous, and for the first time the Jesus movement differentiated itself enough from Judaism as to get a new name, “Christians;” see Acts 11:19-26.

The Good News of Jesus Christ was not accepted by most Jews (Luke is probably exaggerating in Acts 6:7; 21:20). The first preaching about the crucified and risen Messiah took place in the synagogues. Acts reports that there were violent reactions, and Paul describes himself as a pious, zealous Pharisee who sought to destroy the Church, Gal 1:13-14; Phil 3:3-6. The Pharisees were probably Jesus’ great opponents in the realm of religious ideas—they both summoned Jews to follow a specific program, the Pharisees one of observant Judaism according to their oral law and interpretation of the Torah, Jesus a radical, eschatological pre-Fall Torah.²³² Although the gospels, and Church tradition, have largely caricatured the Pharisees as extremely nit-picking legalists without a heart, in fact their program for Judaism was more progressive, flexible, rational and adaptable than others, and not only did it largely impose itself in the form of rabbinic Judaism after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. and the loss of influence of the priestly Sadducees, their views as carried forward by tradition have much to do with the seeming indestructibility of Jews and Judaism, despite the massive efforts to destroy them (up to and including the recent Teutonic “final solution”). In fact, Rabbinic

²³⁰ Note that Stephen and Paul resemble Jesus in the accounts in Acts. Luke’s gospel has no accusations against Jesus regarding the Temple. The early Christians in Luke-Acts go to the Temple, Luke 24:53; Acts 2:46; 3:1-10, etc. The Temple “fizzles out” in Acts once the riot of Acts 21 occurs. A bit more on this later on.

²³¹ This reading is very uncertain. Some good manuscript copies (manuscript copies are all we have as “witnesses” [evidence] for what the “original” text said) have “Hellenists,” others “Greeks.” Since there already were Hellenists in the sense of Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, the better reading here, or at least, the meaning here, must be “non-Jewish Greeks.”

²³² See Mark 7:1-13, where Jesus lambasts Pharisaic traditions as merely human. These would be the “traditions” of the fathers of Gal 1:14, similar sounding to the “Sayings of the Fathers” in the Mishnah, one of which would be to “build a fence around the Torah” to avoid breaking it in the slightest. Jesus and the Pharisees nevertheless shared important beliefs, so that they could debate; from the Sadducee priests, there would be more brute opposition. Recall that Pharisees invited Jesus to meals (Luke 7:36), and many joined Christianity at least for a time (Acts 15:5, though Luke says many priests did the same); cf. Acts 23:1-11.

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Judaism inculcates the biblical (especially Deuteronomic) value of *love* of God, and knows some version of the “Golden Rule” regarding love of neighbor (cf. Tob 4:15).

We tend to imagine the historical Jesus (as presented in some movies) as a handsome, radiant man with a halo around his head, before whom the crowds swooned, all, that is, except some nasty-looking dark guys with crooked noses, the hard-of-heart “Jews.” The fact is that everyone in the real “movie” was Jewish and pretty much looked alike, and that Jesus represented quite a fringe movement in Judaism. Whatever disciples he gathered around him were not too sophisticated, and abandoned him when it became apparent that the “worldly” (as were almost all messianic conceptions) they had placed on him were about to be cruelly dashed. Jesus’ radical eschatological program, especially the ingathering of Israel, hinged on his “worldly” success; otherwise, it would seem to be far-fetched and even absurd (how many prostitutes and sinners have you invited to dinner recently?). But the unexpected had happened: Jesus had been raised from the dead and constituted Lord. He, in his person, was the realm or sphere of salvation. But this was an experience not granted to all. As in all things, short of being ‘knocked off your horse’ (like Paul), personal and sociological dispositions had a lot to do with acceptance of the Good News of Jesus Christ preached by the apostles. Most Jews did not accept the Good News. The program presented by the Pharisees was more in accord with all that they had been taught regarding the Law Moses (see John 9:29). We must keep in mind that faith in Jesus, whether as a result of a resurrection appearance (cf. Matt 28:16-17) or from the preaching of the Apostles or their successors (Rom 10:17), is a gift. We shall have more to say about Israel’s non-acceptance of the Gospel, and its significance, when we discuss Paul.

And so, after repeated “bad experiences” going to the synagogues, with threats to “from now on” go to the Gentiles instead (Acts 13:44-52; Acts 18), Church and Synagogue parted ways, and the Church took on an increasingly Gentile character. The great “ingathering” was of *really* lost sheep (cf. Matt 15:26; Gal 2:15), but this was read as being in God’s plan all along (Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-6; Matt 22:2-10; Luke 14:16-24). The end of Acts finds Paul in Rome, receiving all who came to him, but with the statement that “the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and *they* will hear it.”²³³

²³³ “They,” placed before “and” in the Greek text, is emphatic.