

End of an Era
Philo, Josephus and the First Century
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Slide 1

1. This is the last in a series of presentations looking at Jewish writings between the last events of the Protestant Old Testament and the writing of the New Testament.
2. As we have seen, many of the ideas in the New Testament that differ greatly from those of the Old Testament can be found in Jewish writings written after 400 B.C. and not included in the Jewish Scriptures or the Protestant Old Testament.
3. For example, in the first week, we saw that the first century Jewish understanding that the dead would be resurrected at the end of time was based on the Apocryphal book of *2 Maccabees*, which is part of the Old Testament of Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox, but rejected by Protestants since Martin Luther.
4. In the second week, we saw that ideas of punishment of the dead by fire, totally missing from the Old Testament, were developed by a series of Pseudepigraphic writings collectively known as *1 Enoch*, which also developed ideas about the origins of evil different from those in the Old Testament.
5. Last week, we looked at the Dead Sea Scrolls, Jewish writings from the period just before the birth of Jesus.
6. We saw in those writings the idea that the expected Messiah would resurrect the dead and lead to the final judgment, ideas missing from the Old Testament but essential to Christian beliefs.
7. Today, we will look at Jewish writings from about the time of Jesus to the end of the first century, a period when the books of the New Testament were being written.

Slide 2

1. Based on the Jewish writings that we have looked at earlier and will look at today, it is clear that beliefs of first century Christians about the coming of a Messiah, the origins of evil, the final judgment and life after death were very similar to those of at least many Jews at and before the time of Jesus.
2. That fact is not surprising – Christianity arose in the context of first century Jewish beliefs and Christian writers drew upon those beliefs in explaining Jesus to a Jewish audience.

3. What is surprising is how different Jewish and Christian beliefs are today on subjects on which there was significant agreement in the first century.
4. For example, most Jews today reject the traditional Christian idea of eternal punishment by fire in hell because that idea is missing from the Hebrew Scriptures. Kushner, *To Life!* at 153.
5. But the basic idea of punishment by an eternal fire is found in *I Enoch*, a very popular Jewish writing that was considered authoritative by at least some Jews before Jesus and is quoted in the New Testament.
6. Most Jews today reject the Christian claim of a Messiah who is the incarnation of God.
7. As one author states: “[T]he Christian doctrine that God took the form of a human being in Christ is contrary to Jewish beliefs. To the Jew, God has no human form and no human being has been or ever can be the incarnation of God.” Trepp, *A History of the Jewish Experience* at 100.
8. But looking at *I Enoch* and similar Jewish writings, one highly regarded Jewish scholar recently wrote: “[Christian claims of] God in a human body [are] deeply rooted in the ancient complex of Jewish literature.” Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels* at 7.
9. Today, we will also look at how Jews came to reject the Jewish writings that are consistent with so many Christian beliefs, leading to at least some of the differences between current Jewish and Christian beliefs.

Slide 3

1. Hillel the Elder was an important Jewish teacher, born in Babylon.
2. He taught until he died in Jerusalem in 10 A.D., when Jesus was about 15.
3. Hillel’s grandson, Gamaliel I, was Paul’s Jewish law teacher. *Acts* 22:3.
4. Hillel is famous for accepting a dare from a pagan who said he would convert to Judaism if Hillel could explain the entire Torah while the pagan stood on one foot.
5. Hillel said: “**That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn.**”
6. Jesus taught the same idea: “**So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.**” *Matthew* 7:12.

7. Hillel also taught: **“Pass not judgment upon thy neighbor until thou hast put thyself in his place.”**

8. Jesus taught: **“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.”** *Luke 6:37.*

Slide 4

1. There is no evidence that Jesus and Hillel ever met.

2. But *Luke* reports that the 12-year-old Jesus was **“in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.”** *Luke 2:46.*

3. It is entirely possible that Hillel the Elder was among those teachers.

Slide 5

1. Alexandria, in the Roman province of Egypt, was founded as a Greek-speaking city by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C.

2. By the time of Jesus, Alexandria was home to a number of influential Jews who spoke and read Greek and considered the Greek Septuagint their Holy Scripture.

3. Philo, sometimes called Philo of Alexandria or Philo Judaeus (the Jew), was born to one of the most prominent Jewish families in Alexandria in about 20 B.C.

4. Philo received **“an excellent Jewish education and received training in grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, geometry, poetry, music and Gentile learning.”** Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* at 154.

5. Before he died in about 50 A.D., Philo had authored dozens of works, many of which have survived and have been translated into English.

Slide 6

1. As one author states: **“Philo’s chief aim in all his works . . . is to demonstrate the universal validity of Jewish religion as enshrined in the Old Testament.”** Kennedy, *Philo’s Contribution to Religion* at 19.

2. Philo incorporated Greek philosophy into his writings because he **“claimed that the true wisdom of the Greeks was derived from the Bible.”** Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* at 233.

3. As a result, Philo’s writings **“amalgamate heathen philosophy and Jewish theological teachings.”** Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* at 156.

4. One of these amalgamations supported a revised Jewish understanding of life after death, a view consistent with the beliefs of many Christians.

Slide 7

1. As we have noted before, “[t]here is no notion in what may be called orthodox Israelite religion of a separate existence for the soul after death.” *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* at 295.
2. Instead, as taught in *2 Maccabees*, those Jews who believed in resurrection believed that God would recreate a body at the end of time in the same way he had created Adam. *2 Maccabees* 7:28 – 29.

Slide 8

1. On the other hand, the Greeks believed, based largely on the teachings of Socrates and his pupil Plato, that each individual is made up of an imperfect and perishable body and a perfect and immortal soul that will be returned to the gods upon that person’s death.
2. In 1906, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* concluded that “**belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principal exponent.**” *Jewish Encyclopedia* – Immortality of the Soul.
3. Philo sought to establish that the Greek idea of an immortal soul was based on earlier Jewish teachings and was therefore entirely Jewish.

Slide 9

1. Philo articulated the Greek view this way: “[I]f we were to die, then our soul would be released according to its proper life, being released from the evil and dead body to which it is bound.” Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation*, I 108.
2. He concluded that “**the essence of the soul of man is the breath of God.**” Philo, *The Special Laws*, IV 123.
3. He found support for this idea in the statement in *Genesis* 2:7 that God breathed into Adam “**the breath of life.**” *Id.*
4. From this he concluded that man “**is a composition of earthy substance, and divine spirit.**” Philo, *On the Creation* 134.

Slide 10

1. Then, to prove that this divine soul is immortal, Philo noted the statement in *Deuteronomy* 34:6 that no one knows where Moses is buried. Philo, *The Sacrifices of Abel and Cain* 10.

2. He concluded that this was because no one **“could be competent to perceive the migration of a perfect soul to a living God.”** *Id.*
3. Apparently his idea was that the souls of ordinary mortals can be traced back to their graves.
4. Whether or not this logic is persuasive to you, it was obviously persuasive to Philo and those who accepted his teachings.
5. Paul, writing in about 50 A.D., articulated the Greek idea of an immortal soul that leaves the body and returns to God at death. *Philippians* 1:22 - 24.

Slide 11

1. Philo accepted the views of Greek philosophers Plato and Pythagoras that **“God is unknowable, transcending virtue and the good and the beautiful.”** Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* at 273.
2. But the earliest parts of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures that Philo used, portray God as anything but transcendent and unknowable.
3. For example, *Genesis* describes God walking around the Garden of Eden **“in the cool of the day”** and not being able to find Adam and Eve hiding **“among the trees.”** *Genesis* 3:8.

Slide 12

1. To avoid the ridicule such passages earned from educated Greeks, Philo rejected a literal understanding of the teachings of the Septuagint.
2. For example, with respect to the story that Eve was created from Adam’s rib (*Genesis* 2:22), Philo wrote: **“The literal statement conveyed in these words is a fabulous one; for how can any one believe that a woman was made of a rib of a man, or, in short, that any human being was made of another?”** Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation II* 19.

Slide 13

1. Philo advanced a way of reading those Biblical statements suggesting an anthropomorphic God allegorically.
2. For example, *Genesis* 2:8 states that God **“had planted a garden in the east, in Eden.”**
3. Philo wrote: **“Now to think that it is here meant that God planted vines, or olive trees, or apple trees, or pomegranates, or any trees of such kind, is mere folly.”**

***** We must therefore have recourse to allegory, which is a favourite with men capable of seeing through it; for the sacred oracles most evidently conduct us towards and instigate us to the pursuit of it.”** Philo, *Noah’s Work as a Planter* 32, 36.

4. For Philo, the Garden of Eden was a metaphor for **“virtues and of the actions in accordance with them, which lead it to perfect happiness.”** *Id.* 37.

Slide 14

1. Perhaps because the Greeks ridiculed the story that Sarah, the wife of Abraham, conceived a child when she **“was past the age of childbearing”** (*Genesis* 18:10), Philo treated the story of Abraham, Hagar and Sarah as allegory.

2. For Philo, Abraham was a symbol for learning, Hagar, the handmaiden with whom he had his first son, was a symbol for preliminary instruction, and Sarah, with whom he had Isaac, was a symbol for final virtue. Philo, *The Preliminary Studies* 11 – 24.

3. Interestingly, Paul also says that the story of Abraham, Hagar and Sarah **“may be taken figuratively.”** *Galatians* 4:21 – 31.

4. There is no direct evidence that Philo influenced Paul, but one author states that **“it is remarkable how only this one time Paul resorts to a typically Philonic approach to Scripture.”** Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 333.

5. Whether or not Philo influenced Paul’s use of allegorical interpretation of the Bible, he undoubtedly influenced later writers, including Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Ambrose, to interpret certain passages figuratively.

Slide 15

1. Philo’s potentially most significant contribution to Christian thought is his articulation of the doctrine of *logos*, a Greek word usually translated into English as **“the word.”** *John* 1:1.

2. This doctrine arose from Philo’s efforts to reconcile the Greek conception of God with the teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures.

3. For example, if God is transcendent and totally unknowable, as the Greeks believed, how could man have been created in God’s image and likeness, as the Bible says? *Genesis* 1:26; 9:6.

4. For Philo, the answer was that man was created **“after the pattern of the second deity, who is the Word [*Logos*] of the Supreme Being.”** Philo, *Questions and Answers on Genesis II* 62.

5. **“And this same Word [*Logos*] is continually a supplicant to the immortal God on behalf of the mortal race, which is exposed to affliction and misery; and is also the ambassador, sent by the Ruler of all, to the subject race.”** Philo, *Who is the Heir of Divine Things* 205.

Slide 16

1. Philo’s conception of *Logos* was similar to *Proverb*’s description of Wisdom, which was with God **“from the beginning”** as **“the craftsman at his side”** as God engaged in the acts of creation. *Proverbs* 8:22 – 31.
2. But Philo subtly changed *Proverb*’s concept of Wisdom, *Sophia* in Greek.
3. First, Philo transformed Wisdom, a feminine word in both Greek and Hebrew, to the masculine *Logos*.
4. Second, he concluded that in mediating between a transcendent God and humanity, *Logos* could manifest itself as a human being.
5. Philo taught that Moses and his brother Aaron were both manifestations of *Logos*. Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* at 273.
6. Philo also taught that there was **“not as of yet any one who is worthy to be called a son of God.”** Philo, *On the Confusion of Tongues* 146.
7. Early Christians saw in this statement a suggestion that eventually *Logos* would manifest itself in someone who did deserve to be called the **“son of God.”**
8. For them, that someone was Jesus.

Slide 17

1. The *Gospel of John* expressly describes Jesus in terms of *Logos*: **“In the beginning was [*Logos*], and [*Logos*] was with God, and [*Logos*] was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.** *John* 1:1 – 3.
2. Philo wrote that the **“divine word . . . is placed in the closest proximity to the only true existing God, without any partition or distance being interposed between them.”** Philo, *On Flight and Finding* 101.
3. *John* similarly stated that Jesus **“is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father.”** *John* 1:18.
4. In 1906, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* wrote: **“Undoubtedly the Alexandrian *Logos* concept has had a formative and dominant influence on the presentation of the**

doctrine of Jesus' sonship in the Johannean writings." *Jewish Encyclopedia* – Son of God.

Slide 18

1. The first chapter of *Hebrews* also contains a statement that many scholars have concluded is based on the teachings of Philo: **“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”** *Hebrews* 1:3.
2. Some scholars believe that the writer of *Hebrews* pointed out that Jesus was **“superior to the angels”** (*Hebrews* 1:4) and **“worthy of greater honor than Moses”** (*Hebrews* 3:3) to take advantage of Philo’s teaching that Moses and the angels, although the manifestation of *Logos*, were not yet the **“son of God.”** Philo, *On the Confusion of Tongues* 146.
3. Some scholars have rejected any connection between the New Testament writings about Jesus and teachings of Philo, claiming the New Testament teachings were based on *Proverbs* 8 and the Jewish Wisdom Literature we looked at earlier.
4. More than 100 years ago, an important Philo scholar challenged that conclusion: **“No conclusive argument has been yet produced to account for the Fourth Evangelist’s [i.e., John’s] choice of Logos in preference to Sophia [Wisdom].”** Kennedy, *Philo’s Contribution to Religion* at 75.
5. That argument remains unmet.
6. A recent author writes: **“Philo remains an eloquent witness for the claim that N[ew] T[estament] Christianity is deeply rooted in a Jewish substratum.”** Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 328.

Slide 19

1. Flavius Josephus was born Joseph ben Mattathias to a priestly Jewish family in about 37 A.D., a few years after the death of Jesus.
2. At an early age, he studied the major sects of Judaism to determine which path he should follow, eventually becoming a Pharisee.
3. In his thirties, Josephus was a general commanding Jewish forces in Galilee during the ill-fated Jewish revolt against Rome that led to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
4. He surrendered to the Romans and assisted them until the war ended, at which point he retired to Rome and began writing works of major importance in understanding the land of Israel at the time of Jesus.

5. His most important works, all of which have survived, are *The Jewish War*, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, *The Life of Flavius Josephus* and *Against Apion*.

Slide 20

1. As most Christians know, the New Testament describes two Jewish sects, the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

2. The New Testament teaches that Pharisees accepted the idea of resurrection of the dead at the end of time while the Sadducees rejected it. *Acts* 23:8.

3. Josephus confirmed this difference.

4. With respect to the Pharisees, he wrote: **“They also believe that souls have an immortal rigor in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be detained in an eternal prison, but that the former shall have the power to revive and live again.”** Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18:1:3.

5. In other words, Pharisees believed both body and soul stayed in the grave until resurrection at the end of time, when the righteous would be resurrected.

6. On the other hand, Sadducees believed that **“the soul dies with the body.”** Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18:1:4.

Slide 21

1. Josephus reports that he spent three years in the desert among the Essenes, a Jewish sect not mentioned in the New Testament that is believed to have written many of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Josephus, *The Life of Flavius Josephus* 2:11 – 12.

2. Essenes believed **“[t]hat bodies are corruptible, and that the matter they are made of is not permanent; but that the souls are immortal and can continue forever.”** Josephus, *The Jewish War* 2:8:11.

3. When the souls are **“set free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward.”** *Id.*

4. **“[G]ood souls have their habitations beyond the oceans, in a region that is neither oppressed with storms of rain or snow, or with intense heat, but that this place is such as is refreshed by the gentle blowing of a west wind, that is perpetually blowing from the ocean.”** *Id.*

5. On the other hand, Essenes **“allot to bad souls a dark and tempestuous den, full of never-ceasing punishment.”** *Id.*

6. Josephus noted that the teachings of the Essenes about life after death were **“like the opinions of the Greeks”** and created **“an unavoidable bait”** to join the Essenes. *Id.*
7. The Christian belief that souls immediately go to heaven or hell at death is close to the beliefs of the Essenes.

Slide 22

1. According to Josephus, Essenes believed that **“fate governed all things, and that nothing befalls men but what is according to [fate’s] determination.”** Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13:5:9.
2. That confirms the belief in predestination that we saw last week in the *Community Rule* found among the Dead Sea Scrolls and attributed to the Essenes. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 199.
3. According to Josephus, **“for the Sadducees, they take away fate, and say there is no such thing.”** *Id.*
4. Pharisees took a middle position, believing **“that some actions, but not all, are the work of fate, and some of them are in our own power.”** *Id.*
5. We can see in these positions the debates over the importance of free will and God’s power that have long divided Christians.

Slide 23

1. Josephus said the Essenes did not change garments or shoes until **“they be first torn to pieces.”** Josephus, *The Jewish War* 2:8:4.
2. Apparently referring to the Essenes, he reported that they **“lived in the desert, and used no other clothing than grew upon trees, and had no other food than what grew of its own accord.”** Josephus, *The Life of Flavius Josephus* 2:11.
3. This statement is among the evidence supporting the conclusion that John the Baptist, whose **“food was locusts and wild honey”** (*Matthew* 3:4), may have been an Essene.
4. Josephus told the story of John the Baptist and his death at the hands of Herod. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18:5:2.
5. Josephus also reported on the stoning of **“the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James.”** Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20:9:1.
6. This confirms the statement of Paul that James, the first bishop of Jerusalem, was the brother of Jesus. *Galatians* 1:19.

7. It is also one of the earliest statements outside the New Testament confirming the existence of Jesus.

Slide 24

1. A more extensive description of Jesus by Josephus remains controversial.
2. The entire description, as it has been known since the 11th century, reads: **“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who loved him at the first did not forsake him: for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of the Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.”** Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18:3:3.
3. Some scholars believe this entire description came from Josephus and that Josephus became a Christian.

Slide 25

1. Others believe that monks copying the original added **“if it be lawful to call him a man,”** the reference to **“the Christ,”** and the description of Jesus’ resurrection.
2. The remaining statement, which most scholars believe goes back to Josephus, tracks pretty well the New Testament outline of the facts of Jesus’ life and death, proving to most scholars that Jesus was a real person.

Slide 26

1. Josephus’ first major work reported on the First Jewish Revolt, a rebellion against Roman control that started in Caesarea Maritima, built by Herod the Great along the Mediterranean coast.
2. The riot spread to Jerusalem, where Zealots, violently opposed to Roman authority, took up the fight.
3. Emperor Nero sent 60,000 troops to the area to put down the rebellion.

Slide 27

1. In 70 AD, after a long siege, Roman troops broke down the walls of Jerusalem and entered the city.

2. Josephus reported that there were a total of 1.1 million casualties from the First Jewish Revolt, most of them Jewish. Josephus, *The Jewish War* 6:9:3.

Slide 28

1. The Temple was completely destroyed.
2. This relief on the arch of Titus, the commanding general, shows the soldiers parading through Rome with the golden menorah taken from the Temple.
3. The fall of Jerusalem was an **“early signal of distinction of one [Jewish] entity from the other”** as Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah and those who did not pointed fingers at each other. Shanks, *Partings* at 73.
4. Jewish believers in Jesus as the Messiah claimed that God had destroyed Jerusalem because the Jewish establishment had killed James, their first leader. Eusebius, *The History of the Church* at 61.
5. Other Christians claimed that God had destroyed Jerusalem because not everyone had accepted Jesus as the Messiah. *Id.* at 69.

Slide 29

1. *Mark* quotes Jesus as predicting the destruction of the Temple and encouraging his followers to **“flee to the mountains”** when they saw impending destruction of the city. *Mark* 13:2, 14.
2. Eusebius reported that **“those who believed in Christ migrated from Jerusalem”** to Pella across the Jordan River **“before the war began.”** Eusebius, *The History of the Church* at 68.
3. **“Pious Jews considered the Christian flight an act of treason, and it sealed the fate of the church in the Jewish world.”** Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* at 23.

Slide 30

1. With the destruction of the Temple, **“the Israelite religion of priests performing rituals in the Jerusalem Temple gave way to a new religion of rabbis reading and interpreting texts in synagogues and Judaism as we know it was born.”** Prothero, *God is Not One* at 261.
2. In about 85 A.D., an important rabbi named Gamaliel II introduced a so-called “test benediction” for recitation in the synagogues: **“For the renegades let there be no hope, and may the arrogant kingdom soon be rooted out in our days, and the Nazarenes [Christians] and the *minim* [heretics] perish as in a moment and be blotted out from the book of life and with the righteous may they not be inscribed.”** Barrett, *The New Testament Background* at 210 – 211.

3. The word “*minim*” included Jewish Christians. *Id.*
4. The *Gospel of John*, written near the end of the first century, apparently refers to this event, saying that **“the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.”** *John 9:22.*
5. The requirement that Jewish Christians repeat this anti-Christian benediction **“effectively excommunicated Christians from the synagogues and formalized the break between the two faiths.”** Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* at 491.

Slide 31

1. The fact that many first century Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah did not mean that they rejected the description of the Messiah that was being used in connection with Jesus.
2. An Orthodox Jewish scholar recently wrote: **“The great innovation of the Gospels is only this: to declare that the Son of Man is already here, that he walks among us.”** Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels* at 101.
3. That fact is made clear by two related Jewish writings made near the end of the first century **“when Christianity was making an aggressive attack on Judaism.”** Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* at 141.
4. Both sought to reassure those who rejected Jesus as the Messiah that the coming of the Messiah and the end of time were nonetheless near, at which time their oppression by the Romans would end.

Slide 32

1. *4 Ezra* or *2 Esdras*, written as an ancient revelation by God to Ezra, sought to explain that God allowed the Romans to destroy the Temple because of their sins: **“For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him. Thus, the disease became permanent; the law was in the people's heart along with the evil root, but what was good departed, and the evil remained.”** *4 Ezra 3:21 – 22.*
2. This is similar to the basis for Christian doctrine of original sin: **“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death came to all men, because all men sinned.”** *Romans 5:12.*

Slide 33

1. *4 Ezra* said Jewish independence would be established by a Messiah, whose identity would be kept hidden **“until the end of days.”** *4 Ezra 12:32.*

2. *4 Ezra* quoted God as saying that when **“my son the Messiah”** is revealed, he will reign among the living for four hundred years, at which time **“my son the Messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath.”** *4 Ezra* 7:28 – 29.
3. Christians didn’t believe that the identity of the Messiah would be hidden until the end of time or that Jesus would die when he returned.
4. As a result, most scholars believe this reference to the Messiah as the son of God is **“independent of the Jesus movement entirely.”** Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels* at 97.
5. The similarities with New Testament teachings reflect beliefs shared by those who considered Jesus the Messiah and those who were still waiting.
6. As one author writes: **“4 Ezra often conforms to traditional rabbinic exegesis and views.”** Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* at 414.
7. Said another way, it was not the idea that the Messiah was the son of God that set first century Christians apart from other Jews – it was their conclusion that Jesus was that son.

Slide 34

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

Slide 35

1. According to *2 Baruch*, when the Messiah comes to initiate the final judgment, **“books will be opened in which are written the sins of all those who have sinned, and**

again also the treasuries in which the righteousness of all those who have been righteous in creation is gathered.” *2 Baruch* 24:1.

2. **“Then all who have fallen asleep in hope of Him shall rise again. But the souls of the wicked, when they behold all these things, shall then waste away the more. For they shall know that their torment has come and their perdition has arrived.”** *Id.* 4-5.

3. According to *Revelation*, at the final judgment **“[a]nother book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”** *Revelation* 20:12.

4. Jesus said: **“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”** *John* 5:28 - 29.

Slide 36

1. In a very eloquent passage, the writer of *2 Baruch* predicted that the end times were imminent: **“For the youth of this world has passed away, and the power of creation is already exhausted, and the coming of the times is very near and has passed by. And the pitcher is near the well, and the ship to the harbor, and the journey to the city, and life to its end.”** *2 Baruch* 85:10.

2. *Matthew*, written at about the same time, quotes Jesus as saying that the end times would occur in **“this generation.”** *Matthew* 24:34.

3. The end time teachings of *2 Baruch* and the New Testament are similar because of **“shared religious and cultural traditions”** among first century Christians and Jews. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 426.

4. As one Jewish author recently wrote, the end of the first century was **“a time in which the question of the difference between Judaism and Christianity just didn’t exist as it does now.”** Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels* at 1.

5. First century Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah and those who didn’t believe in the imminent end of time, resurrection of the righteous and punishment of the wicked by fire, supported by all the writings we have looked at over the last four presentations.

6. Those Jews who did not believe the Messiah had already come in Jesus were anxiously awaiting a Messiah as described in those writings to relieve them from their oppression and usher in the end of time.

7. They soon found one.

Slide 37

1. In 132 A.D., a Jewish soldier named Simon bar Koseba led an armed rebellion against Rome that became known as the Second Jewish Revolt.
2. After initial successes, Rabbi Akiba, the most influential rabbi of the time, proclaimed him the Messiah and gave him the name Simon bar Kokhba, “Son of the Star,” based on the prediction in *Numbers* that “[a] **star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.**” *Numbers* 24:17.

Slide 38

1. Emperor Hadrian then sent his best generals to Jerusalem, brutally crushing the rebellion and executing bar Koseba.
2. Jerusalem and 985 surrounding villages were destroyed and Jews were barred from entering all of Judah.

Slide 39

1. The disaster of the Second Jewish Revolt made Jewish leaders “**wary of messianism.**” Armstrong, *The Bible* at 92.
2. Bar Koseba became known as the “son of the lie.”
3. Jewish authorities began viewing with skepticism the Jewish apocalyptic literature, such as *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, that supported the idea that a divine Messiah would soon come and rescue them.
4. In about 135 A.D., Rabbi Akiba, who had proclaimed bar Koseba the Messiah, now said the Jewish writings that supported that claim were “**those of heretics.**” Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* at 300.
5. The fact that Christians found support for Jesus as the Messiah in those same writings provided another reason for rejecting them as “**apocalyptic fantasies.**” *Id.*
6. Seeing the Septuagint, which included some of these writings, as the Bible of the Christians, “**the Jews abandoned the use of the Greek Septuagint, and this circulated henceforth solely among the Christians.**” Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* at 175.
7. In 200 A.D., Tertullian wrote that Jewish authorities had rejected reliance on *1 Enoch* and similar writings because they “**tell of Christ.**” Tertullian, *On the Apparel of Women* 3.
8. By a process that is still largely unknown, influential rabbis concluded that authentic Hebrew Scriptures were only those books written in Hebrew before 400 B.C.,

which excluded *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees*, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch* and many other writings that were consistent with Christian beliefs.

9. Christians continued to rely on and preserve the writings rejected by the Jews that we have reviewed during these presentations.

Slide 40

1. The rejection of Jewish writings consistent with Christian beliefs led to many of the differences between Christian and Jewish beliefs that we see today.
2. With only the Hebrew Scriptures as authority, most Jews today reject the ideas of *1 Enoch* and the New Testament that the dead will be punished eternally by fire.
3. With only the Hebrew Scriptures as authority, most Jews today reject the idea of *4 Ezra* and the New Testament that the Messiah will be the son of God.
4. With only the Hebrew Scriptures as authority, most Jews today reject the idea of *2 Baruch* and the New Testament that the end of time is near.
5. With only the Hebrew Scriptures as authority, most Jews today reject the idea of *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees* and *Tobit* and the New Testament that Satan is the enemy of God.

Slide 41

1. From time to time over the course of this series, I have quoted from a book by Larry Helyer, a Christian and retired professor of Biblical Studies at Taylor University.
2. In ending his book, he said he hoped **“the New Testament will never again be read in quite the same way.”** Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 501.
3. As we end this series, it is my hope that you will see the New Testament in the light of Jewish thinking that developed between the testaments.
4. If you see it that way, you will see that Christianity reflects its Jewish roots in ways that most people have never imagined.
5. But you will also see what makes Christianity unique.
6. As I said last week: **“Christianity’s uniqueness . . . lies not so much in its communal practices and eschatological expectations but in its confession that the son of a carpenter from Nazareth in Galilee was indeed the Messiah and son of God who taught, healed, suffered, died, rose, ascended, and promised to return some day in glory to judge the living and the dead.”** Shanks, *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls* at 201.

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