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THE SEVENTY-WEEKS PROPHECY OF DANIEL 9:24–27 AND FIRST-CENTURY AD JEWISH MESSIANIC EXPECTATION

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Abstract

For Christians who interpret the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:24–27 by correlating the coming of the messiah with the arrival of Jesus Christ, the question of whether Jesus could have been identified as the predicted messiah at the time of fulfillment is theologically significant given biblical claims of prophetic intelligibility. There is a consensus among scholars affirming the view that interpretation of the seventy-weeks prophecy led to a climate of messianic expectation among certain sectors of first-century Jewish society. This position is supported by the explicit connection of the seventy weeks to the anticipated arrival of a messiah in Melchizedek (11Q13). Josephus provides an independent line of circumstantial evidence that dates this expectation to the first century. This warrants the theological conclusion that the prophecy was, in principle, intelligible to those among whom it was fulfilled.

Keywords: Adventism, messianism, sabbatical chronology, Second Temple literature.

Introduction

In Seventh-day Adventism, Daniel 9:24–27 is interpreted as a messianic time-prophecy via chronological calculations that correlate the coming of the Anointed One in the sixty-ninth week to the baptism of Jesus Christ. From time to time, Adventist scholars have taken an interest in identifying similar, or parallel, interpretations in the reception of this prophetic passage.¹ This establishes that

¹For Adventist commentary on the reception history of the seventy weeks, see LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, vol. 1, *Early Church Exposition, Subsequent Deflections, and Medieval Revival* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1950), 193; William R. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, Rev. ed., Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 105–110; and Jacques B. Doukhan, *On the Way to Emmaus: Five Major Prophecies Explained* (Clarksville, MD: Messianic Jewish Publishers, 2012), 182–183.

their view is not idiosyncratic but rather stands within a tradition of Jewish and Christian interpretation.

However, for Christians who interpret the seventy weeks of Daniel as a prediction of the first advent of Jesus Christ,² a question of prophetic intelligibility remains to be answered: At the time when the messianic prediction was believed to be fulfilled, could contemporaries have been able to identify the Messiah as the one predicted by the seventy weeks? For a prophecy that is unintelligible to those among whom it is fulfilled is arguably not a prophecy in the biblical tradition (Deut 18:22; Amos 3:7; and esp. Dan 12:4).³

Toward answering this question, the purpose of this paper is to investigate how the interpretation and calculation of the seventy-weeks prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27 influenced the development of messianic expectation in first-century (AD) Judaism. Research into interpretations of the seventy weeks in extant Second Temple literature yields general precedents for interpreting the prophecy as a messianic prediction. When combined with a record of first-century, time-based messianic expectation, these constitute both direct and circumstantial evidence that it would have been possible for Jesus's contemporaries to interpret events in his life as a fulfillment of Daniel's seventy-weeks prophecy.

The influence of Daniel looms large in sectarian first-century Judaism. Daniel is one of the books most alluded to in the New Testament⁴ and the ninth most copied book found at Qumran.⁵ In lieu of an exhaustive survey of the primary literature, this research will use secondary sources as a guide to the Second Temple literature available in critical editions. These secondary sources have been selected for their focus on Second Temple messianism and the reception of Daniel 9:24–27.

The majority of the secondary sources cited in this research hold to a late date for the book of Daniel, which pushes the date of its completion as far as the latter half of the first century BC. Joseph A. Fitzmyer observed that this causes problems for determining whether Daniel or the Septuagint comes first in the development of the messianic idea. On the other hand, he dates the Similitudes of

²See, e.g., Peter J. Gentry, "Daniel's Seventy Weeks and the New Exodus," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 14, no. 1 (2010): 26–44.

³Stephen R. Miller takes Daniel 12:4 to mean that "as the time of fulfillment draws nearer, the 'wise' will seek to comprehend these prophecies more precisely, and God will grant understanding ('knowledge') to them" (*Daniel*, NAC 18 [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998], 321).

⁴Craig A. Evans, "Daniel in the New Testament: Visions of God's Kingdom," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, VTSup 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 2:490.

⁵Peter W. Flint, "The Daniel Tradition at Qumran," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, 2:328.

1 Enoch “to the period after the final redaction of the book of Daniel.”⁶ Also in Fitzmyer’s view, interpretive decisions reflected in the translation of the Septuagint do not bear on the question of how Daniel 9:24–27 was interpreted in the rest of extant Second Temple literature. Based on those determinations, this study will take as given that, regardless of how early or late one dates Daniel, Daniel dates early relative to the Second Temple literature surveyed in this study.⁷

Survey of Secondary Sources

In 1997, John J. Collins wrote that the consensus of “the late 1980’s,” “which held that messianism was not an essential or even important part of Judaism around the turn of the era,” had been challenged by “the release of the unpublished [Dead Sea] Scrolls in 1991.”⁸ Yet as far back as 1981, Roger T. Beckwith asserted that

there is strong evidence to show that the Essenes, the Pharisees, and the Zealots all thought that they could date, at least approximately, the time when the Son of David would come, and that in each case their calculations were based upon Daniel’s prophecy of the 70 weeks (Dan. 9, 24-27), understood as 70 weeks of years.⁹

In addition, by 1980, Beckwith had attempted to reconstruct the Essene calculation of the seventieth week when “the Messiahs were to be manifested,” finding that it “would begin between 10 and 6 B.C. and would end between 3 B.C.

⁶Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 56–57, 84.

⁷This dates Daniel earlier than the earliest form of the Aramaic Levi Document (third or early second century BC), which was not under consideration by Fitzmyer. However, the conclusions of this research can still hold if one dates Daniel later than the Aramaic Levi Document, because its jubilees were likely added later (see n31 for further discussion).

⁸John J. Collins, “Jesus, Messianism and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Qumran-Messianism*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Gerbern S. Oegema (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 102, 106. Cf. J. H. Charlesworth, “From Messianology to Christology: Some Caveats and Perspectives,” in *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, ed. Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 251. See also James H. Charlesworth, “From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects,” in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth et al. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 35.

⁹Roger T. Beckwith, “Daniel 9 and the Date of Messiah’s Coming in Essene, Hellenistic, Pharisaic, Zealot and Early Christian Computation,” *RevQ* 10, no. 4 (1981): 521.

and 2 A.D.” Beckwith concluded that this Essene chronology “gives a reason why Messianic expectation was strong at the time of Jesus’s birth.”¹⁰

Beckwith’s main sources for this conclusion are Jubilees, the Testament of Levi, Josephus, Seder Olam Rabbah, and certain Qumranic texts, including Melchizedek.¹¹ Analysis of this documentary evidence relative to the research question will follow, but for the purposes of this survey, suffice it to note that N. T. Wright has found Beckwith’s conclusions sufficiently persuasive so as to base his theological system on them. The reconstructed, first-century Jewish worldview that informs Wright’s reading of the New Testament is built around a collective, if not pervasive, Second Temple Jewish consciousness of Jewish exile having been extended past Babylonian captivity, along with the expectation that this extended exile would end when the seventy weeks of years were fulfilled and the Messiah appeared.¹² That the critics of Wright’s reconstruction find the general outline of Beckwith’s interpretation uncontroversial is indicative of the soundness of Beckwith’s thesis, even as Wright bemoans the lack of “recognition” that it has received.¹³

William R. Shea’s contemporaneous treatment of the major sources found in Beckwith’s early work on this subject concluded that these sources “reinforce the general idea that the period of time between the end of the first century B.C. and the beginning of the first century A.D. was, indeed, a time when the Messiah was expected.”¹⁴ Yet, in writing an Adventist apology, Shea’s brief survey was entirely focused on bolstering a “year-day principle” for interpreting time-prophecy. He

¹⁰Roger T. Beckwith, “The Significance of the Calendar for Interpreting Essene Chronology and Eschatology,” *RevQ* 10, no. 2 (1980): 180. For the purposes of this research, messianic expectation includes any expectation of a Jesus-like Christ figure. For the research question, it is irrelevant whether two messiahs were expected or one since, regardless, the prophecy would have been intelligible at the time of its fulfillment with sufficient determinacy to identify Jesus as *a* Christ, if not *the* Christ, at which point further theological development could have taken place.

¹¹See Beckwith’s major update to “Daniel 9” published as “The Year of the Messiah: Jewish and Early Christian Chronologies, and their Eschatological Consequences,” in *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian: Biblical, Intertestamental and Patristic Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 215–275.

¹²N. T. Wright, “Yet the Son Will Rise Again: Reflections on the Exile and Restoration in Second Temple Judaism, Jesus, Paul, and the Church Today,” in *Exile: A Conversation with N. T. Wright*, ed. James M. Scott (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 22–30.

¹³*Ibid.*, 26. See, e.g., Jörn Kiefer, “Not All Gloom and Doom: Positive Interpretations of Exile and Diaspora in the Hebrew Bible and Early Judaism,” in *Exile: A Conversation with N. T. Wright*, 130–131; and Robert Kugler, “Continuing Exile Among the People of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Nuancing N. T. Wright’s Hypothesis,” in *Exile: A Conversation with N. T. Wright*, 165–170.

¹⁴Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, 108–109.

argued for this principle based on Second Temple and early rabbinic Jewish interpretation of the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:24–27 as weeks of years.¹⁵ Shea did not explore the historical development of expectation nor the implications of such expectation for validating the prophecy itself.

By contrast, in *One Who Is to Come*, Joseph Fitzmyer traces the development of the messianic idea in Judaism and early Christianity, arguing for its inception in Daniel 9:24–27. Whether that text plays an incipient role or a pivotal role,¹⁶ Fitzmyer’s work is significant in that his treatment of the primary sources foregrounds the messianic significance of Melchizedek on account of its reference to the seventy-weeks prophecy. In Fitzmyer’s exhaustive survey of the Second Temple literature, Melchizedek is the only source that explicitly combines apparently messianic language with an allusion to the seventy-weeks prophecy.

Finally, Lester Grabbe, writing in the decade following Beckwith’s initial publication on the subject, yet seemingly unaware of, or independent of, Beckwith’s work, found that the “70-weeks prophecy—in whatever form—served as a basis for apocalyptic speculation for two centuries until the fall of the Temple in [AD] 70.”¹⁷ Surveying the same sources as mentioned above, Grabbe links the Damascus Document’s anticipation of a “Teacher of Righteousness” to the seventy weeks.¹⁸ While acknowledging our historical ignorance of the textual sources for any possible religious motivations for Jewish first-century revolts, Grabbe finds hints that Daniel 9:24–27 may have been in the background of Josephus’s description of the final days of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.¹⁹

Ben Zion Wacholder is the author of the earliest secondary source consulted in this research. In 1975 he attempted to correlate the dates of messianic figures to sabbatical years, including John the Baptist, Jesus, and Bar Kochba.²⁰ Taking the

¹⁵In Hebrew usage, the time periods that the concept of a week organizes into cycles of seven can be either days (as in the English usage) or years. The latter type of week can be referred to as a “week of years” (Lev 25:8) or a sabbatical cycle. Seven weeks of years is a jubilee cycle (Lev 25:10). In this research, “sabbatical chronology” refers to the periodization of history, including predicted events, according to sabbatical and jubilee cycles.

¹⁶“Despite the best efforts of Joseph Fitzmyer, messianic expectation cannot be reduced to the use and interpretation of the word משיח (John J. Collins, *Scriptures and Sectarianism: Essays on the Dead Sea Scrolls* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014], 101).

¹⁷Lester L. Grabbe, “The Seventy-Weeks Prophecy (Daniel 9:24–27) in Early Jewish Interpretation,” in *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Shemaryahu Talmon (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 611.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 601–602.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 605.

²⁰Ben Zion Wacholder, “Chronomessianism: The Timing of Messianic Movements and the Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles,” *HUCA* 46 (1975): 201–218.

seventy weeks to coincide with sabbatical cycles, this is circumstantial evidence for the seventy-weeks prophecy's influence on messianic expectation.²¹ Although an examination of the coherence of Wacholder's chronology is beyond the scope of this research, note that Wacholder's chronology is one year off from Zuckermann's "standard" chronology and has come under critique.²²

The preceding survey reveals that a consensus currently exists among contemporary scholarship regarding the interpretation of the seventy-weeks prophecy leading to a climate of messianic expectation among certain sectors of first-century Jewish society. The scholars discussed in this survey assemble the evidence in various ways, but all arrive at similar conclusions. What remains for this research is to investigate their primary sources to determine the strength of the evidence for the consensus position.

Survey of Primary Literature

The following evaluation of the primary sources will proceed from (1) those that provide circumstantial evidence for the consensus view that the seventy-weeks prophecy influenced first-century Jewish messianic expectation to (2) those that provide unambiguous support for the consensus view. A major cluster of circumstantial evidence is represented most comprehensively in Jubilees but also includes the Apocalypse of Weeks (1 Enoch 93; 4Q247), the Animal Apocalypse (1 Enoch 85–90), and the Damascus Document.²³ These sources develop, to a greater or lesser extent, a chronology that periodizes history according to seven-

²¹Cf. Devorah Dimant, "The Seventy Weeks Chronology (Dan 9:24–27) in the Light of New Qumranic Texts," in *The Book of Daniel in Light of New Findings*, ed. A. S. van der Woude (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1993), 57–76. Dimant argues for a universal sabbatical chronology of history that lies behind Daniel's seventy weeks and is expressed in other texts such as Jubilees and the Apocalypse of Weeks.

²²Gentry, "Daniel's Seventy Weeks," 37. See *ibid.*, 37n28, where on this point Gentry follows the critique of independent researcher and Adventist apologist Bob Pickle, "Daniel 9's Seventy Weeks and the Sabbatical Cycle: When Were the Sabbatical Years?" *Pickle Publishing*, 2007, accessed March 20, 2020, <http://www.pickle-publishing.com/papers/sabbatical-years.htm>.

²³On the Damascus Document, see Ben Zion Wacholder's reconstruction and translation of 4Q268 1, 1–5 in *The New Damascus Document: The Midrash on the Eschatological Torah of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Reconstruction, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 24–27: "1:1 [As for the Divisions of the] Eschatological [Epochs]: Surely they will occur (as was presaged) [according to all (the number of) its days and a]ll 1:2 [(the number of) the cycles of] i[ts festivals,] when its beginning (was) and ending (will occur); for [(God)] has fore[told the firs]t 1:3 [as well as the latter things and] what will transpire thereafter in them (the Divisions of the Eschatological Epochs), since H[e has set up Sabbaths and His covenantal festi]vals 1:4 [for eternity (and) since one may neith]er advance [nor post]pone th[eir] festivals, [their months or 1:5 their Sabb[aths]."

year cycles.²⁴

In the Animal Apocalypse, which recapitulates the story of God’s people from creation in the figures of animals, the period of time between exile and the Maccabean revolt (1 Enoch 89:59–90:25) is governed by seventy shepherds, each having an “appointed time” (89:64). The Apocalypse of Weeks briefly covers the same narrative but periodized as a series of seven weeks. Both apocalypses conclude with the ushering in of a more ideal era, when it can be said that “the Lord of the sheep rejoiced” over the animals (90:38) and when “there shall be elected the elect ones of righteousness from the eternal plant of righteousness, to whom shall be given sevenfold instruction concerning all his flock” (93:10), respectively.

Seder Olam Rabbah is a post-Second Temple sabbatical chronology that builds on this tradition in response to Christian chronology.²⁵ The book’s commentary on Daniel interprets the seventy weeks as referring to “70 sabbatical periods from the destruction of the first Temple to the destruction of the second Temple” (chap. 28).²⁶ Of course, this interpretation leaves “167 years of Jewish history . . . unaccounted for,” but the rationale for this chronology is explained based on purported biblical examples of countdowns to destruction commencing with prior destructions.²⁷

Based solely on the intertextual evidence, it is indeterminable whether all these chronological similarities reflect an influence on, or a common source between, the aforementioned sources and Daniel 9:24–27. But hypothesizing a common source goes beyond the existing documentary evidence. Regardless, the fact remains that the concept of historical periodization necessary to calculate the seventy weeks as ending in the first century AD was available at that time, for it is well represented in the available contemporary literature. Accordingly, the Apocryphon of Jeremiah implicitly calculates the seventy weeks as weeks of

²⁴For further examples offered in the course of arguing for Daniel’s influence on Jubilees, see James M. Scott, *On Earth as in Heaven: The Restoration of Sacred Time and Sacred Space in the Book of Jubilees* (Leiden: Brill: 2005), 93–192.

²⁵Heinrich W. Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam: The Rabbinic View of Biblical Chronology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), xii.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 242.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 244. Chapter 28 of Seder Olam Rabbah concludes, “And why does the Scripture say 70 weeks? That the Divine decree was before the 70 years. Similarly, it says (*Gen.* 6:3): ‘his days shall be 120 years.’ And it says (*Gen.* 7:3): ‘In year 600 of Noah’s life.’ It is impossible to say so; but the Divine decree was issued 120 years before. Similarly, it says (*Is.* 7:8): ‘In another 65 years, Ephraim will no longer be a people.’ That was in year four of Ahaz. It is impossible to say so, but the Divine decree was issued in the time of Amos, two years before the earthquake, as it is said (*Amos* 7:11): ‘So said Amos, Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will certainly be exiled from its land’” (*ibid.*, 242–243).

years.²⁸ It prophesies a remnant who will survive a crisis of faithfulness in the “seventh jubilee” (4Q390 1, 7–12).²⁹

This sabbatical chronology, attributed to “the book of Enoch” (Testament of Levi 16:1),³⁰ was applied in the Testament of Levi to “the seventy weeks” (71:1) between exile (chaps. 14–15) and the coming of a priesthood that would “be wholly true to the Lord” (17:2). There is no calculation of the time of this priest figure’s coming. While these passages in their Greek final form reflect Christian emendation, they are based on an earlier Jewish text, the Aramaic Levi Document, extant only in fragments.³¹ Beckwith finds that it is plausible to synchronize the seven priest-jubilees in Testament of Levi 17 with the Essene sabbatical chronology by taking them to be a postexilic succession running concurrently with the seventy weeks.³² Beckwith thus dates the arrival of the Essene priestly messiah between 10 BC and AD 2. However, the textual evidence that something similar to Testament of Levi 17 was a part of the Aramaic Levi Document is inconclusive and does not witness to the sabbatical chronology in its specifics.³³

²⁸Grabbe, “Seventy-Weeks Prophecy,” 601–602.

²⁹See also 4Q385a 45, 3–4; 4Q387a 3 II, 3–4.

³⁰Testament of Levi 14.1 cites the same source, possibly a reference to 1 Enoch.

³¹“In previous generations it has been called *Aramaic Testament of Levi* or *Aramaic Levi*.” Jonas C. Greenfield, Michael E. Stone, and Esther Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document: Edition, Translation, Commentary*, SVTP 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1. Testament of Levi 18, which describes the priest figure, “is perhaps unmatched for its attribution of superlatives to a human figure.” Thus, it is commonly held that the complete text, extant only in Greek, has been “shaped” into “a testament of [Christian] christological import” by “compressing and omitting some of its sections and creating/adding others” (George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005], 308). Its “oldest Greek witness” has been dated to the tenth century (H. W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary*, SVTP 6 [Leiden: Brill: 1985], 14. But the earliest form of the Aramaic Levi Document likely dates to the third or early second century BC, making it “one of the most ancient Pseudepigrapha” (Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document*, 20).

³²Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology*, 228–234. This research will follow the convention of identifying the Qumran community as Essene without implying a position on the Qumran-Essene hypothesis, to which the research question is indifferent.

³³Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology*, 228 (responding to Hollander and de Jonge, *Twelve Patriarchs*, 175) assumes the originality of the priest figure in Testament of Levi 18 based on research by Emile Puech arguing that Qumran fragments dating to ca. 100 BC are related to the Testament of Levi. Emile Puech, “Fragments d’un apocryphe de Lévi et le personnage eschatologique: 4QTestLévi^{c-d}(?) et 4QAJa,” in *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid 18–21 March, 1991*, ed. Julio Trebolle Barrera and Luis Vegas Montaner, STDJ 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 2:449–501. The fragments Puech tentatively titled 4QTestLévi^{c-d} were originally published as

Essene messianic expectation is extensively documented; notably in the Messianic Apocalypse, which predicts that “[the heav]ens and the earth will listen to his anointed one” and that the Lord “will honor the pious upon the throne of an eternal kingdom, freeing prisoners, giving sight to the blind, straightening out the twis[t]ed” (4Q521 2 II, 1, 7–8).³⁴ In the explanation Josephus gave for a group who perished in the destruction of the Second Temple (AD 70), there is evidence beyond the Essene community for first-century messianic expectation based on the seventy weeks.³⁵ He attributed their last stand to their belief in a time-prophecy predicting the arrival of a messianic figure: “But what more than all else incited them to the war was an ambiguous oracle, likewise found in their sacred scriptures, to the effect that at that time one from their country would become ruler of the world.”³⁶ Josephus rejoined that, in fact, this predicted ruler was Vespasian.³⁷

Jewish Messianic expectation is also evident at the end of the first century in 4 Ezra 12:31–32 and 13:1–56, in which an eschatological “Son” does battle with the nations.³⁸ This figure is possibly connected to the seventy weeks in 2 Baruch, in which a messiah arrives to usher in the eschaton subsequent to tribulations that occur during the “weeks of seven weeks” (28:2).³⁹

4QApocryphon of Levi (4Q540–541). In private correspondence with the relevant parties, Robert A. Kugler reports that “Malik agrees with Puech that 4Q540 bears some resemblance to *Testament of Levi* 17, but he rejects the association of 4Q541 with *Testament of Levi* 18” (*From Patriarch to Priest: The Levi-Priestly Tradition from Aramaic Levi to Testament of Levi*, EJL 9 [Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1996], 51). See Puech’s sabbatical reconstruction of 4Q540 I, 2 in *Qumrân Grotte 4.XVII: Textes araméens, première part, 4Q520–4Q549*, DJD 31 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 2001), 220. And cf. its absence in Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 2:1079. Kugler (*From Patriarch to Priest*, 51) found the evidence linking 4Q540 to Testament of Levi 17 “intriguing,” while Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel found it “not convincing” (*The Aramaic Levi Document*, 31). Neither included the jubilees of Testament of Levi 17 in their reconstructions of the Aramaic Levi Document. “In the final analysis, it is necessary to treat Original *Testament of Levi* 17–18 as creations of the document’s author, even if they have antecedents in older, unknown texts.” Kugler, *From Patriarch to Priest*, 198.

³⁴For a complete overview of the sources, see Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come*, 88–111.

³⁵Grabbe, “Seventy-Weeks Prophecy,” 606–608.

³⁶*J.W.* 6.5.4 §312 [Thackeray, LCL].

³⁷*J.W.* 6.5.4 §313 [Thackeray, LCL].

³⁸B. M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra (Late First Century A.D.) with the Four Additional Chapters: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 520.

³⁹Scott, *On Earth as in Heaven*, 97; Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come*, 122–124.

Essene messianic expectation and Daniel 9:24–27 converge explicitly in Melchizedek (11Q13), which predicts an eschatological jubilee in association with a Melchizedek figure: “And this [wil]l [happen] in the first week of the jubilee (that occurs) after [the] ni[ne] jubilees. And the D[ay of Aton]ment i[s] the e[nd of] the tenth [ju]bilee.”⁴⁰

This jubilee is dated to the arrival of the “messenger” of Isaiah 52:7 who is identified with the “anointed of the spir[it]” (i.e. messiah) prophesied by “Dan[iel].”⁴¹ According to the editors of the critical edition, “The reading דניאל [Dan[iel]] strongly suggests that the remainder of the line quotes part of Dan 9:25 or 26. The clause in Dan 9:25 עד משיח נגיד שבועים שבעה [until an anointed, a prince, it is seven weeks] seems quite appropriate and fits very well in the remaining space.”⁴²

Thus, “11QMelchizedek represents an eschatological text that interprets the restoration of Israel in Isa 61:1–3 within the framework of a sabbatical chronology that understands the 70 weeks of years in Daniel 9 in terms of jubilee years in Leviticus 25.”⁴³ Beckwith inferred that the messiah of Melchizedek was anticipated between 10 BC and AD 2, if the Essene chronology he reconstructs in Testament of Levi 17 is operating in the background of Melchizedek.⁴⁴ But this reconstruction must now be regarded as speculative.

Conclusion

The scholarly consensus that the interpretation of Daniel 9:24–27 resulted in first-century messianic expectation is supported by several independent lines of circumstantial evidence connecting the seventy-weeks prophecy and Jewish messianic expectation. It is also supported by the explicit link between the seventy weeks and the anticipated arrival of a messiah in Melchizedek. Josephus provides an independent line of circumstantial evidence that dates this expectation to the first century. Taken together, these provide sufficient evidence from Second Temple literature to warrant the theological conclusion that the seventy-weeks prophecy was intelligible, in principle, to those among whom it was fulfilled.

As Beckwith well notes, “This is a conclusion of importance for the study of the New Testament, since it gives a reason why Messianic expectation was strong

⁴⁰11Q13 II, 7-8 in DJD 23, 229.

⁴¹11Q13 II, 18 in DJD 23, 230.

⁴²Florentino García Martínez, Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, and Adam S. van der Woude, eds., *Qumran Cave 11.II: 11Q2–18, 11Q20–30*, DJD 23 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1998), 232, translations from 229, 230 supplied in brackets.

⁴³Scott, *On Earth as in Heaven*, 96.

⁴⁴*Calendar and Chronology*, 232. See footnote 33 on the question of whether the Testament of Levi chronology is Essene.

at the time of Jesus's birth."⁴⁵ "Of course, contemporary Jewish writers had other religious concerns as well. But the popular expectation is very evident in the background of the Gospels."⁴⁶

Finally, of interest for further research by Adventist apologists may be Beckwith's observation that there is a numerical identity (three and a half) and thematic similarity ("Gentile possession of Jerusalem") in the final half-week of Daniel 9:27 and the forty-two months of Revelation 11:2. This could open up another line of argumentation for the interpretation of the 1,260 days as 1,260 years (year-days). For, as he argues, the time, times, and half a time in Revelation can be said to expand the final half-week of the seventy weeks into a subsequent, longer time period in the same way that the seventy weeks expand the seventy years of Jeremiah 29:10.⁴⁷ To wit, the week of years concept implied by seventy years (Jer 29:10) is the hermeneutical key by which the subsequent period can be calculated as seventy weeks of years (Dan 9:24). By the same recursive logic, does not the year-day concept implied by dividing the final week of the seventy weeks of years into two, three-and-a-half-day periods, *mutatis mutandis*, imply that the subsequent, numerically identical three-and-a-half-year period (Dan 7:25; Rev 11:2–3, 12:6, 14, and 13:5) should be calculated as consisting of a year for each day? Exegetes willing to bracket common assumptions about the historical context and dating of Daniel 7 in order to take a text-oriented approach could develop this interpretation.

⁴⁵Ibid., 232.

⁴⁶*Calendar and Chronology*, 232n24.

⁴⁷Ibid., 308–309.

