

## THE TWO AEONS AND THE MESSIAH IN PSEUDO-PHILO, 4 EZRA, AND 2 BARUCH

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John Strugnell, in reviewing Pierre Bogaert's commentary on 2 Baruch, suggests that on the basis of this work, 4 Ezra, and Pseudo-Philo (*Biblical Antiquities*) "someone should try a descriptive study of the whole of apocalyptic Pharisaism of ca. 70—remembering that apart from the Psalms of Solomon, Josephus, and the gospels, this is all the direct evidence for rabbinic Judaism that we have until we reach the period after Bar Kochba."<sup>1</sup>

The present article outlines one element of the above suggested descriptive study, viz. the conception of the two aeons and the Messiah. This element is significant, since the essential feature of apocalyptic lies in its dualism—especially, as P. Vielhauer observes, in the doctrine of the two aeons which dominates its thought-world.<sup>2</sup>

There appears to be a consensus among scholars that the thinking represented in 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra, and *Biblical Antiquities* is that of Pharisaic Judaism. R. H. Charles dealing with 2 Baruch writes, "Its authors were orthodox Jews and it is a good representation of the Judaism against which the Pauline dialectic was directed . . . almost the last noble utterance of Judaism . . . written by Pharisaic Jews as an apology for Judaism. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Introducing 4 Ezra G. H. Box writes, "Its importance for the history of Rabbinical doctrine and for the elucidation of the earlier (pre-

<sup>1</sup> J. Strugnell, review of *L'Apocalypse Syriaque de Baruch: Introduction, traduction du syriaque et commentaire*, by Pierre Bogaert in *JBL* 89 (1970): 484-485.

<sup>2</sup> E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. W. Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1965), 2:588.

<sup>3</sup> R. H. Charles, "2 Baruch," *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, ed. R. H. Charles, 2 Vols. (Oxford, 1913), 2:470.

Talmudic) phases of Judaism is very great.”<sup>4</sup> In discussing *Biblical Antiquities*, J. Klausner affirms that “. . . there is no doubt that it originated in the same circle from which came the Syriac Baruch and IV Ezra.”<sup>5</sup>

Charles, following R. Kabisch, sees several sources with varying dates and authorship in 2 Baruch. He detects three fragmentary apocalypses written before A.D. 70 and four such sections after the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> Hence he proposes that the final editing of 2 Baruch took place between A.D. 110 and 120. Box, discussing 4 Ezra, notes, “in its present form it is a compilation made by an Editor . . . , and was published by him about the year AD 120. . . .”<sup>7</sup> P. Bogaert thinks that the introductory passages in 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra give us a key as to their date. The former commences with the words: “And it came to pass in the twenty-fifth year of Jeconiah . . . that the word of the Lord came to Baruch. . . .” (1:1). Bogaert assumes that the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in A.D. 70 is to be identified with the beginning of the captivity of “Jeconiah.” So he adds twenty-five years to A.D. 70 and arrives at A.D. 95 as the date of 2 Baruch.<sup>8</sup> He goes on to affirm: “Et dans ce cas, il n’y a pas d’obstacle majeur à ce que toute apocalypse ait été composée à la date indiquée par la suscription, en 95 ap. J.-C.”<sup>9</sup> In 4 Ezra the first vision commences with the words: “In the thirtieth year after the downfall of the City I, Salathiel— . . . was in Babylon. . . .” (3:1). Bogaert adds these thirty years to A.D. 70, arriving at A.D. 100 as the date of 4 Ezra. D. S. Russell concludes that 4 Ezra may have been penned near “the close of the first century AD, perhaps between the years

<sup>4</sup> G. H. Box, “4 Ezra,” *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, ed. R. H. Charles, 2 Vols. (Oxford, 1913), 2:542.

<sup>5</sup> J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel* (New York, 1955), p. 366. Klausner also draws our attention to the fact that the ideas found in these works are closely akin to those in Talmud and Midrash; see pp. 330-331.

<sup>6</sup> R. H. Charles, *The Apocalypse of Baruch* (London, 1896), p. liii.

<sup>7</sup> G. H. Box, “4 Ezra,” p. 542.

<sup>8</sup> P. Bogaert, *L’Apocalypse Syriacque de Baruch: Introduction, traduction du syriaque et commentaire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1969), 1:285.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 293.

AD 90 and 100.”<sup>10</sup> The date of *Biblical Antiquities* is equally debated. M. R. James in his introduction to this work writes:

Its importance lies in this, that it is a genuine and unadulterated Jewish book of the first century—a product of the same school as the *Fourth Book of Esdras* and the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, and written, like them, in the years which followed the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.<sup>11</sup>

L. Cohn and G. Kisch agree with James as to its post-A.D. 70 date.<sup>12</sup> Bogaert on the other hand sees no reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in *LAB* and therefore contends for a pre-A.D. 70 date. He writes: “Dans les *Ant. Bibl.* aucune allusion n’est faite à cet événement.”<sup>13</sup> For Bogaert the second destruction of the temple separates *Biblical Antiquities* from 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra. Bogaert’s dating of *Biblical Antiquities* is supported by D. J. Harrington: “In fact, given the absence of any genuine reference to the fall of Jerusalem, it is likely that the work was composed before A.D. 70.”<sup>14</sup> We are thus justified in placing the three documents under consideration in the final third of the first century A.D.

The original language of these apocalypses is believed to have been Hebrew.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, there is a close literary dependence

<sup>10</sup> D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 63.

<sup>11</sup> M. R. James, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo* (London, 1917), pp. 7, 31.

<sup>12</sup> L. Cohn, “An Apocryphal Work Ascribed to Philo of Alexandria,” *JQR* 10 (1898): 327; G. Kisch, *Pseudo-Philo’s Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (Notre Dame, 1949), p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> Bogaert, *L’Apocalypse*, p. 258.

<sup>14</sup> D. J. Harrington, “The Biblical Text of Pseudo-Philo’s LIBER ANTIQUITATUM BIBLICARUM,” *CBQ* 33 (1971): 17. Notice on the other hand the rather late date Klausner (*Messianic Idea*, pp. 366-367) attributes to *Biblical Antiquities*. He believes that it was composed after 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra and places it in the time of Trajan and Hadrian (ca. A.D. 110-130).

<sup>15</sup> But notice the recent questions raised by Bogaert, and Strugnell’s reply (cf. Strugnell, Review, p. 485) that 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra, and *Biblical Antiquities* belong closely together and that 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra are closely dependent on the demonstrably Hebrew *Biblical Antiquities*. Furthermore 2 Baruch, according to Bogaert, is a second source of the Hebrew 4 Ezra; hence a Hebrew original is highly likely for 2 Baruch. Nevertheless, one needs to find more plausible examples of mistranslation. *Biblical Antiquities* has come down to us in a Latin version, but it too goes back to an original Hebrew

between 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra. E. Schürer and a host of others believed that 2 Baruch was earlier than 4 Ezra.<sup>16</sup> Russell, with more recent contributors, states, "It is generally agreed that the imitator is 'Baruch'."<sup>17</sup> For the present purpose, this matter need not concern us. The very nature of the question indicates that we are justified in seeing a common theology in these two apocalypses. A far more critical question is that dealing with sources. As mentioned above, Charles dissects 2 Baruch into seven sections. Composite authorship is also maintained for 4 Ezra by Kabisch, Charles, Box, and C. C. Torrey. W. Harnisch treats these two apocalypses as redacted unities, with an emphasis on the "Einheitlichkeit beider Schriften."<sup>18</sup> In examining this very question Russell comes to the conclusion that:

The consensus of opinion is against the dissection of this book [4 Ezra] into a number of separate works of different dates. In support of the literary unity of the work it has been argued that the undoubted inconsistencies to be found in it can readily be explained by reference to the author's use of different traditions which he was not disposed to harmonize with one another and indeed which he could not make to harmonize even if he were disposed to do so. The book as it stands . . . may well be the product of a single author. . . .<sup>19</sup>

(see D. J. Harrington, "The Original Language of Pseudo-Philo's *LAB*," *HTR* 63 [1970]: 514; id., ed. and trans., *The Hebrew Fragments of Pseudo-Philo*, Text and Translations, SBL Pseudepigrapha Series 3, 1974).

<sup>16</sup> E. Schürer, *Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1909), 3:309-311. So also Bissell, Thomson, Kabisch, Klausner, De Faye, Clemen, Wellhausen.

<sup>17</sup> Russell, *Method and Message*, p. 64. So also Langen, Hilgenfeld, Renan, Dillmann, Box, Gunkel, Schreiner, Lagrange.

<sup>18</sup> W. Harnisch, *Verhängnis und Verheissung der Geschichte* (Göttingen, 1969), p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Russell, *Method and Message*, p. 63. He is supported by H. H. Rowley (*The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, 2d ed. [London, 1947], pp. 141), who cites James, Clemen, Lagrange, Violet, Grey, and others favoring the unity of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. More recently Michael Stone ("The concept of the Messiah in IV Ezra," *Religions in Antiquity*, ed. J. Neusner [Leiden, 1968], pp. 295-296) took G. H. Box to task on his source dissection, concluding in one place, "It is best, therefore, to see the vision as the composition of the author, employing a literary form well known to him from tradition" (p. 303). Again, M. Stone ("Features of the Eschatology of IV Ezra" [Doctoral Dissertations], *HTR* 58 [1965]: 463) contends that "the book is substantially a literary unity from the hand of one author living between 95 and 100 C.E."

The same writer takes a very similar view with regard to 2 Baruch:

There seems to be less reason even than in the case of II Esdras to break the book up in this way [i.e., Charles's dissection of 2 Baruch]. When allowance is made for the inevitable inconsistency of apocalyptic and its free use of traditional material, in literary or oral form, there seems little reason to doubt the unity of this work whose homogeneity of treatment and style indicates a single author.<sup>20</sup>

It is in the light of this suggested unity that the particular eschatological elements will be examined. Recognizing the incorporation of contradictory traditional materials, we consider it appropriate to base our study on the final products.

*Biblical Antiquities'* "literary style is exceedingly monotonous and full of repetitions."<sup>21</sup> It seems to pattern itself somewhat on the Books of Chronicles, but deals only with the period from Adam to the death of Saul. By means of fabulous genealogies, paraphrases of biblical stories, and some inventions (e.g., Kenaz, the first judge), the author's purpose seems to supplement the existing biblical narratives. The book obviously seeks to edify, to deepen the spiritual tone of some historical periods, and to strengthen the reader's belief in divine providence and the high mission of Israel. The doctrines of the resurrection, the day of judgment, and the advent of the Messiah, though not prominent, show the influence of rabbinic Judaism as we also see it in the oldest Midrashim.<sup>22</sup>

Though the teaching of the two aeons and the Messiah is not prominent in the *Biblical Antiquities*, possibly because this work is primarily a collection of stories and legends, aspects thereof are nevertheless to be found. To *Biblical Antiquities*, "the basic element is not the nationalistic-worldly expectation, but the End

<sup>20</sup> Russell, *Method and Message*, p. 65. We have already noted the support Russell receives for his contentions from H. H. Rowley and others to whom Rowley refers. Recently Bogaert also favored the unity of 2 Baruch, as does J. Strugnell (Review, p. 485).

<sup>21</sup> Kisch, *Pseudo-Philo's Liber*, p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Cohn, *Apocryphal Work*, p. 322.

of Days and the Age to Come.”<sup>23</sup> One of the most concise passages bearing on our topic is found in 3:10:

But when the years of the world shall be fulfilled, then shall the light cease and the darkness vanish; and I will quicken the dead and raise up from the earth them that sleep; and Sheol shall pay its debt and Abaddon give back that which was committed unto it, that I may render unto every man according to his works and according to the fruit of their imaginations, until I judge between the soul and the flesh. And the world shall rest, and death shall be quenched, and Sheol shall shut its mouth. And the earth shall not be without birth, neither barren for them that dwell therein; and none shall be polluted that hath been justified in Me. And there shall be another earth and another heaven, even an everlasting habitation.

The author of *Biblical Antiquities* clearly believes that the resurrection of the dead would occur at the end of the age or world. This end would be hastened (19:13).<sup>24</sup> Then the sleeping dead shall be raised from the earth (19:12; 28:10).<sup>25</sup> *Biblical Antiquities*, as well as the two apocalypses and the Talmud, speaks of the “treasuries of souls (*promptuaria*)” in which the souls of the dead are kept (21:9; 32:13).<sup>26</sup> These treasuries are to be emptied at the end of “this world.” Sheol and Abaddon will return what was committed to them, so that the Lord at the end of the age may render unto every man according to his works. The reign of death will end, for the lot of the righteous “shall be in eternal life” (23:13; 19:12).

“When the ungodly are dead they shall perish,” but the righteous who have fallen asleep shall be delivered (51:5). Even the remembrance of the wicked will perish and their punishment shall be suited to their offense (3:10; 44:10; 23:6; 38:4; 68:4).<sup>27</sup> Decisions for right must be made now; for there is no room for

<sup>23</sup> Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, p. 369.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. 2 Bar 20:1, 2; 54:1; 83:1.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Dan 12:2; 2 Bar 11:4; 21:24.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. 2 Bar 21:23; 30:2; 4 Ezra 7:29-32. Also notice talmudic quotations in Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, p. 333, n. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. 2 Bar 44:15; 59:2.

repentance after death, nor can the fathers after their death intercede for Israel (33:2-5).<sup>28</sup>

The present temporary age will then be succeeded by "another earth and another heaven, even an everlasting habitation" (3:10). It will be a "place of sanctification" in which the just will have no need of the light of sun or moon but dwell in the light of the restored precious stones (19:13; 26:13; cf. also 13:6).

Political success and material prosperity are hardly touched upon in *Biblical Antiquities*, and it is debatable whether the King-Messiah is even referred to. James is "unable to find any anticipation of a Messiah in our text. It is always God, and no subordinate agency, that is to 'visit the world' and put all things right."<sup>29</sup> Klausner<sup>30</sup> believes that there may be such a reference in the prayer of Hannah: "And so shall all judgment endure until he be revealed which holdeth (*qui tenet*) it" (51:5, 6). He considers the words *qui tenet* as referring to "Shiloh" in Gen 49:10. Hence Klausner understands *qui tenet* in the sense of "he who takes over the rulership." James thinks that this reference is to Saul or David, though he sees a similarity with St. Paul's ὁ κατέχων ("he who restrains" or "he who grasps").<sup>31</sup>

*Biblical Antiquities* clearly presents the two aeons separated by the day of judgment. This age is transient; the age to come is everlasting. There is no messianic age separating the two.

It is evident that *Biblical Antiquities*, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch breathe that spirit of rabbinic Judaism which arose partly prior to, and mostly after, the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem.

It is especially in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch that we notice the questioning mood and despair which seems to have seized many at the end of the first century A.D. Yet in these same works we

<sup>28</sup> Cf. 2 Bar 85:9.

<sup>29</sup> James, *Biblical Antiquities*, p. 41. The word *Christus* occurs in 51:6 and 59:14.

<sup>30</sup> Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, p. 367.

<sup>31</sup> James, *Biblical Antiquities*, p. 42. James believes 59:1-2 also refers to Saul or David (p. 41).

find a polemic against skepticism. This polemic, Harnisch claims, is framed in the doctrine of the two aeons.<sup>32</sup>

Wir haben nachzuweisen versucht, dass die in beiden Apokalypsen geltend gemachte, *polemisch* konzipierte Zwei-Äonen-Lehre insonderheit darauf abzielt, das Problem des Ausbleibens der Verheissung zu lösen und in eins damit die unausweichlich gestellte Warum-Frage des Zweifels zu beantworten. . . . Mit ihr soll die Skepsis . . . erschüttert und ins Unrecht gesetzt werden.<sup>33</sup>

It is true that there is a disparity between God's promises and the realities of history with all its ills and sorrows, but there is a time coming when history, i.e. this age, will give way to the "age to come" when the Creator's intent will be realized.

2 Baruch and 4 Ezra are written against the background of terrible tragedy; hence in them the question of theodicy recurs. Many of the apocalyptic expectations can only be fully appreciated when we consider this basic concern. The disparity between God's promises and the realities of history leads the apocalyptists to polemicize against despair and skepticism. There is sin in the nation, but there will be an end to sin. History, i.e. this age, which began with the fall will end with the *eschaton*. This aeon is characterized by sorrows and ills, but both Ezra and Baruch are assured that the suffering of God's people will not be perpetuated *ad infinitum*. There is a better aeon to come, which is not far off.

In the first vision of 4 Ezra (3:1-5:19)<sup>34</sup> Uriel tries to reassure Ezra that the end of the present age is approaching. The demise of this aeon cannot be delayed. Before the end, however, the predetermined number of the righteous, who are currently in their chambers or storehouses, must be completed. The idea of "treasuries" in which some are kept, which we previously saw in *Biblical Antiquities*, recurs here. 2 Baruch also refers to this concept as does the Talmud, only in 2 Baruch the number to be fulfilled is

<sup>32</sup> Harnisch, *Verhängnis*, pp. 240, 323.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 324.

<sup>34</sup> It has been generally recognized that the first and last two chapters are later Christian interpolations. It is for this reason that the theological contribution of these sections will be disregarded. See B. M. Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* (New York, 1957), p. 22.

of all souls who should be born, without limiting it to the righteous (21:23; 23:5, etc.)<sup>35</sup>

Certain signs will precede the end. As indicated in 4 Ezra, these include terror, lack of faith, an increase in unrighteousness, a fading of truth, wisdom and knowledge, and the desolation of the presently dominating world power (the Roman Empire). There are changes in nature, with the sun shining at night, the moon giving its light during the day, stars falling from heaven, premature infants not only surviving but also dancing, and the springs of fountains failing (4 Ezra 5:1-13; 6:20). Earthquakes, intrigue among the nations, confusion and bewilderment are all signs of the nearness of the end (9:3; 13:30). God's people pass through narrow and dangerous paths into future bliss because of the absolute wickedness of this world (7:1-16). Nevertheless, the "first age" will be succeeded immediately by the "age to come" just as Esau was followed by Jacob without delay at the time of their birth (6:6-10). Blessed is he who survives these messianic woes, for he will enjoy the period of salvation and felicity inaugurated when those removed from the earth without dying return with the Messiah (6:25-28).

The picture in 4 Ezra now changes from the signs and hardships which precede the messianic age, and that age itself is suddenly introduced. The survivors are granted a view of the heavenly Jerusalem and paradise. The pre-existent Messiah (12:32; 13:26, 52; 14:9)<sup>36</sup> and those accompanying him are revealed (7:26-30). In chap. 7 we pass quickly over his person and work, which are described in greater detail in the visions of chaps. 11-13.

According to the third vision, the Messiah appears at the end of this aeon to rule for 400 years,<sup>37</sup> after which he and all who are alive die (7:30). The messianic age according to the seer is a period of transition which belongs to this age and terminates

<sup>35</sup> Cf. the 144,000 in Rev 7:4; 14:1.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. 2 Bar 30 (as also in *Derekh Erets Zuta*, chap. 1).

<sup>37</sup> The figure is apparently based on the total years of the rule of the Davidic dynasty in Jerusalem.

with it. This view is also represented in 2 Bar 40:3.<sup>38</sup> However, 4 Ezra is unique in depicting a period of seven days of primeval silence between "this aeon," and the "aeon to come." During this period of primeval silence the Messiah and all who draw breath will have died. This may be due to the fact that for 4 Ezra the end is like the beginning. As there was a primeval silence during creation week, so there must be a primeval hush before the new age, before a new creation can arise.<sup>39</sup>

As suggested above, the work and person of the Messiah is described with considerable detail in the two visions recorded in chaps. 11-12 and 13 of 4 Ezra. The first vision has been named the "eagle vision," and the second has been called "the man from the sea." The designations for the Messiah vary. He is called "my Son" (4 Ezra 13:32, 37, 52; 14:9), possibly based on the messianic appellation in Ps 2:7. Again, probably imitating Dan 7:13, he is called "Son of Man," simply "Man," or "a man" (13:2, 25, 32). M. Stone was unable to find any relationship to "Son of Man" ideas in the interpretation in chap. 13. It is his contention that "on textual grounds 'servant' must represent the original reading of those verses which have been construed in the past to show a 'Son of God' ideology in IV Ezra."<sup>40</sup>

In the "eagle" vision the Messiah is likened to a lion who reproves the eagle (Rome). The eagle is said to be the same as "the fourth kingdom which appeared in vision to . . . Daniel" (12:11). The Messiah, for whom Davidic descent is claimed, finally destroys these Gentiles but delivers the surviving remnant, "making them joyful until the End come, even the Day of Judgment . . ." (12:33, 34).

In the next vision Ezra sees a great wind on the sea which caused "one like a man" to come up out of the heart of the seas, flying on the clouds of heaven (13:1ff).<sup>41</sup> Those who hear him

<sup>38</sup> Cf. also Rev 20:3.

<sup>39</sup> Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, p. 355.

<sup>40</sup> Stone, "Features of the Eschatology of IV Ezra," p. 463. Cf. also id., "The Concept of the Messiah in IV Ezra," p. 307.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Dan 7:2, 3, 13; Rev 20:8.

melt like wax before fire, and whatever he looks upon trembles. After this the seer notices an "innumerable multitude of men" coming up out of the sea to make war against the "Man." The "Man" proceeds to cut a mountain out for himself and flies up onto it. Though all those gathered for war are seized by fear they nevertheless attack, only to be burned up by the fire which proceeds from the "Man."

Subsequently he descends and gathers around him another multitude, viz. a "peaceable" one. Among those who draw nigh to him are some full of joy while others are full of sorrow.<sup>42</sup> These are exiled Jews (in "bonds") whom the Gentiles are bringing back as an oblation to God.<sup>43</sup>

In the interpretation which follows, the "Son" is identified as standing on Mt. Sion. Sion, i.e. the heavenly Jerusalem, comes and is made manifest to all people (4 Ezra 9:26-10:59).<sup>44</sup> The "Son" rebukes the hostile multitude and finally destroys it "by the Law which is compared with fire" (13:38).<sup>45</sup> The peaceable multitude are the ten tribes exiled in the time of Hoshea, now returned to Palestine. It seems that this group includes the Israelite survivors in Palestine itself.<sup>46</sup>

Throughout these visions of the messianic age, political success is stressed in that the exiles return to Palestine and all who are in Palestine are delivered. The material prosperity so prominent in 2 Bar 29 is hardly referred to. This leads Klausner to conclude that 4 Ezra is more spiritual, "although as in any thoroughly Jewish book he [4 Ezra] does not nullify the political expectations. . . ."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup> H. Gunkel ("Das 4. Buch Esra," *Die Apocryphen und Pseudepigraphen des ATs*, ed. E. Kautzsch [Hildesheim, 1962], p. 395 n.u.) thinks this refers to Jews and Gentiles, righteous and unrighteous ones. Klausner (*Messianic Idea*, p. 360) believes the whole group depicts Gentiles and differentiates, like 2 Bar 72:2-6, between those Gentiles who did not oppress Israel and those who did.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Isa 66:20.

<sup>44</sup> This fourth vision describes a mourning woman who suddenly disappears and in her place stands the New Jerusalem.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Rev 19:20.

<sup>46</sup> Box ("*4 Ezra*," pp. 618-619) suggests this may also include proselytes.

<sup>47</sup> Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, p. 365.

After the seven-day hush the new aeon dawns. The general resurrection precedes the final judgment (7:31-44):

But the Day of Judgment shall be the end of this age and the beginning of the eternal age that is to come wherein corruption is passed away, weakness is abolished, infidelity is cut off; while righteousness is grown and faithfulness is sprung up (7:113, 114).

The judgment shall last "a week of years," during which time compassion gives way to absolute truth and judgment (7:43). Rewards will be commensurate with conduct. Both Paradise and Gehenna will be disclosed. The tragedy is that only a few will enjoy delight, but torment will come to many. The world to come is for the few only, for "many have been created, but few shall be saved" (8:3). Here, then, we have the doctrine of the first aeon, part of which is the messianic age. Both are transitory and to be succeeded by the "aeon to come," which is truly eternal and full of righteousness.

Where is Paradise in 4 Ezra? It has been suggested that Paradise must be on earth because Paradise is near Gehenna, and Gehenna was commonly thought by the Jews as belonging to the earthly sphere.<sup>48</sup> This is to be contrasted with the transcendent view of the future age in 2 Baruch. In Ezra, as well as *Biblical Antiquities*, it is the day of judgment (preceded by the resurrection only in 4 Ezra), which introduces the "age to come." This seems to contradict 6:7-10, which speaks of the future age as immediately succeeding this aeon. It could very well be that the illustration of Jacob and Esau was part of traditional material dealing with the doctrine of the aeons. The writer, therefore, utilized the illustration without being overly concerned about the contradiction.<sup>49</sup>

Though the role of the Messiah has taken up the entire chap. 13 and much of chaps. 11 and 12, the Messiah is referred to only once outside of these chapters, viz. in chap. 7:28-30. This single

<sup>48</sup> H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 4 vols. (Munich, 1928), 4:813.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

reference is in the context of a comprehensive picture of eschatology. In considering this strange phenomenon, Stone suggests:

The reason for this may well be that the Messiah was not the answer to the questions that Ezra was asking. . . . Thus the place of the Messiah in the author's eschatological scheme cannot be doubted, yet it is misleading to see him as the exclusive center of his aspirations.<sup>60</sup>

2 Baruch commences with the problem of theodicy, as had 4 Ezra. "Why do God's people suffer and their enemies prosper?" In answer, the seer is assured that the "aeon to come" is reserved for the righteous. Retribution will fall on the Gentiles. The very destruction of Jerusalem will hasten the coming of the future aeon.

Messiah will come, but his advent will be preceded by the "birth-pangs of the Messiah." The hardship and tribulations before his advent will be so immense that men will abandon all hope. This very condition itself will be one of the signs of the Messiah's imminence (2 Bar 25:1-4). Instead of the Talmudic portrayal of the "week of years"<sup>61</sup> at the end of which the son of David will come, 2 Baruch has twelve woes (27:1-15). These twelve divisions include: commotions; the slaying of the great ones; the death of many; the sending of the sword; famine and absence of rain; earthquakes and terrors; falling of fire; rapine and oppression; wickedness and unchastity; terrible confusion; and finally in the last woe, all the previous elements mingled.

The tragedy is that the time of affliction is coming, but most world inhabitants are unaware of it. Wisdom and intelligence is hidden, and those who know the truth keep silent. The law of God will be disregarded, and brutality and violence will run rampant (48:26-41). As in 4 Ezra so in 2 Baruch there are two significant visions which are part of the "birth-pangs of the Messiah." The vision of the "Cloud with Black and White Waters" depicts the twelve periods of history prior to the Messiah's coming (53:1-12). The black waters represent dark eras in history and the white waters bright periods. These are then followed by the thir-

<sup>60</sup> Stone, *The Concept of the Messiah in IV Ezra*, p. 312.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Sanhedrin 97a; *Derekh Erets Zuta*, chap. 10, etc.

teenth period of the travail pains of the Messiah (70:1-10). It is a time of hatred, lack of affection and terrible confusion and death. However, the "holy land shall have mercy on its own, and it shall protect its inhabitants at that time" (71:1).

To this should be added the vision of "the Forest, the Vine, the Fountain and the Cedar" with its interpretation dealing with the "four kingdoms." Though the interpretation does not agree too well with the parable, the main points are clear. The vision deals with the destruction of the kingdoms mentioned in Dan 7 (cf. 4 Ezra 12). Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome are referred to. Rome is the fiercest and harshest, strong like the forest of the plain and proud like the cedars of Lebanon. However, the Messiah, who is compared to the fountain and the vine, will deal with Rome. The last leader of Rome is taken up to Mt. Zion to be convicted of his sin and destroyed while the reign of the Messiah "will stand forever, until the world of corruption is at an end. . . ." (39:3-40:4).

Having put an end to the Roman armies and their leader, the Messiah gathers all the remaining nations before his seat of judgment. Those who oppressed Israel are put to the sword, the rest are spared to serve his people (72:1-6): "When he has brought low everything that is in the world and has sat down in peace for the age on the throne of his kingdom . . . joy shall . . . be revealed, and rest shall appear" (73:1). All bloodshed, contentions, hatred and envy cease. Wild beasts shall minister to man and asps submit themselves to children (73:6).<sup>52</sup> "The earth shall yield its fruit ten thousandfold. . . ." (29:5). Manna shall descend from on high and be consumed during the messianic age. After his reign the Messiah returns to glory, which commentators understand to be a reference to heaven (30:1). This is quite different from the picture of 4 Ezra 7:29-30, where the Messiah and all who live die at the close of the messianic kingdom.

As in 4 Ezra, the messianic days are temporary. It is true that 2 Bar 40:3 states that the messianic age "will stand forever," but

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Isa 11:6-9; *Siphra Behuqqothai*, chap. 2.

"forever" must be understood relatively, viz. until the age of corruption is ended. Since this transitory world is the locale for the messianic kingdom, the present aeon and the messianic age, like two halves of a whole, will disappear before the new aeon begins. In 2 Baruch the new age is viewed from a transcendental perspective.<sup>53</sup> This new aeon is identical with the heavenly world.

The new aeons begins with the resurrection of the dead, who proceed from the "treasuries" (2 Bar 30:2). This resurrection is immediately subsequent to the Messiah's ascension to glory. Those resurrected will be able to recognize each other (50:3). Subsequent to the resurrection the judgment takes place. For the godless there is "the way of fire and the path which bringeth to Gehenna," where after beholding the glory of the righteous they suffer torment and waste away (85:13; 30:4, 5; 51:1-6).

The righteous, on the other hand, receive the immortal world and shall be transformed in stages into the "splendour of angels," yes there shall "be excellency in the righteous surpassing that in the angels" (51:7-13). Those who have been saved by their works . . . [will] be made equal to the stars. . . ." (51:7).

We are now ready to pull our strands together. *Biblical Antiquities*, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch all mention the *promptuaria* or treasuries of souls, even though they vary as to who is in these "chambers." In all three the treasuries are opened at the resurrection when Sheol must give up those who have passed away and death shall cease. The present aeon is regarded as temporary, marked by hardship, tribulation and despair. Though *Biblical Antiquities*, possibly because of the very nature of its contents, does not specifically mention the messianic age, this age features prominently in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch.<sup>54</sup> In these two apocalypses the messianic age is understood as part of this aeon. For 4 Ezra

<sup>53</sup> Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 6:809-810.

<sup>54</sup> Unless *Bib. Ant.* 3:10 refers to the messianic age: "And the world shall rest, and death shall be quenched, . . . And the earth shall not be without birth, neither barren for them that dwell therein; and none shall be polluted that hath been justified in Me." On the other hand, this may be a description of the new aeon. See Harnisch, *Verhängnis*, p. 116, n. 3.

it will last 400 years, while 2 Baruch does not specify its length. Besides bringing joy to his own, the Messiah will deal with the Gentiles, especially the Roman power. Both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch include visions which depict the demise of the fourth kingdom (Rome) and its leaders. For those in Palestine or those who come to Palestine, safety is assured. Here political expectations and territorial nationalism are characteristic of the spirit evidenced in other Jewish pseudepigraphal books. Material prosperity is particularly prominent in 2 Baruch while this is not so pronounced in 4 Ezra.

According to 4 Ezra the Messiah dies after the 400-year reign with all who draw breath. The world then is in a seven-day period of primeval silence as the new aeon is created. Here 2 Baruch differs sharply from 4 Ezra in that the Messiah (who is pre-existent in both apocalypses) ascends to glory, which presumably is to be understood as heaven. P. Billerbeck believes that 2 Baruch is the literary representative of a compromise tradition which endeavored to find a balance between the older earthly-national messianic kingdom tradition and the younger transcendental eschatology represented in 1 Enoch 71, Slavonic Enoch, and the Assumption of Moses.<sup>55</sup> Thus, for Billerbeck, 2 Baruch breaks from the earthly-national orientation after the ascension of the Messiah, into a transcendental eschatology by viewing the new aeon in heaven. It is maintained that in 4 Ezra Paradise and Gehenna lie opposite each other and since for the rabbis Gehenna was on earth, Paradise must also be found there. Though it is true that in 2 Bar 4:2-7 the seer beholds the heavenly Jerusalem and Paradise in the presence of God, it is not very clear whether both the city and Paradise remain there. Where are we to find Gehenna in 2 Baruch? Are we to assume that the wicked descend into the torments of Gehenna on earth? It is not possible to determine this with any degree of certainty at the present stage of research.

The new aeon commences with the resurrection, preparatory to the day of judgment mentioned by all three documents. Rewards

<sup>55</sup> Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 4:809.

would be commensurate with one's deeds. Paradise is enjoyed by the righteous, while the wicked waste away in Gehenna. The new aeon, again all three writers agree, will be "everlasting."

At a time of national catastrophe with its resultant despair, these writers raised the hopes of those who, recognizing their failures, had most probably or to a large degree given up hope. The readers are thus assured that the disparity between God's promises and the realities of history would not persist. Israel and Yahweh's law would go on forever.