

NT 01: From the Exile to New Testament

Monte F. Shelley, 2 Jan 2011

Quotes

- Today is God's way of giving us another chance. (Ziggy)
- When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.
- The time has come for us to stand a little taller, to lift our eyes and stretch our minds to a greater comprehension and understanding of the grand millennial mission of this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (Gordon B. Hinckley)

1. Timeline from Exile to the New Testament

Year	Event
605–538 BC	Babylonian empire (Nebuchadnezzar) Jewish Exile begins; Zoroastrian religion
c. 604 BC	<i>Daniel</i> interprets king's dream
16 Mar 597 BC	Ezekiel and many taken captive; Zedekiah = king
Jul 586 BC	Jerusalem destroyed; most killed, few captives
538–331 BC	Persian empire (Cyrus)
538–537 BC	Cyrus lets 50,000+ Jews return & rebuild temple; majority stay (Diaspora= voluntary scattering);
530–520 BC	Samaritans cause work on temple to cease
520 BC	<i>Haggai</i> and <i>Zechariah</i> prophesy
516 BC	Temple of Zerubbabel completed (2 nd Temple)
482–478 BC	<i>Esther</i> , queen of Persia; basis for Purim holy day
c. 458 BC	<i>Ezra</i> returns with authority, people, money
445 BC	<i>Nehemiah</i> returns to Jerusalem as governor; wall rebuilt to protect Jerusalem, Ezra read and interpreted the Law, Feast of Tabernacles
430 BC	<i>Malachi</i> prophesies
385 BC–AD 529	<i>Plato's Academy</i> (Greek science and philosophy)
331–166 BC	Greek empire (Alexander the Great)
c. 200 BC	Septuagint (Greek translation of OT+apocrypha) Dead Sea Scrolls (found in 1947)
166–63 BC	Maccabean/Hasmonean priests revolt at attempts to eradicate Jewish religion; independence
63 BC–AD 476	Roman empire (Pompey)
c. 37 BC	King Herod became ruler of Israel
c.17 BC–AD 64	Temple of Herod (renovated 2 nd ; enlarged site)
AD 70	Romans destroyed the Temple of Herod

2. Zoroastrian religion of Iran (Babylon, Persia)

"To Zoroaster and his followers, the ancient Persians ... God is a spirit. No image, therefore, could represent him; and idolatry has always been proscribed. ... Ahura Mazda (God, the Eternal Light) ... is God, the Almighty, the Supreme" (Dawson, 13–14). "Ahura Mazda ... [is] the creator, ruler, and preserver of the universe, without form, invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient, without beginning or end" (*Zoro*, 37).

"The Jews, who were carried away as captives to Babylon, were in constant contact with the Iranians. During the [70] years of their exile they borrowed from the Zoroastrian faith various doctrines such as the belief in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body and future reward and punishment." (*Zoro*, 18)

Before the exile, Jews often worshiped idols and many Canaanite gods. Jews in Babylon believed idol worship had caused God to punish them. When Jews who were born or lived in Babylon for 70 years returned to Jerusalem, they abandoned idol worship and worshiped only one God.

3. Many Jews return to Jerusalem; majority do not
Exile refers to forced scattering. *Diaspora* refers to voluntary dispersion or scattering of those who left or did not return.

"The returning exiles ... did not find the land empty. The countryside and villages of northern Judah were still inhabited by ... the people of the land who were the descendants of the Jews who had not gone into exile. Because many of those who returned from Babylon were the descendants of the original noble and priestly classes, they quickly moved to regain control of the land and imposed themselves as the new social and religious aristocracy." (JWNT, 17)

4. Zechariah prophesies of Christ and latter-days Prophecies of Christ's first and second coming

Rejoice greatly, ... Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee ... riding ... upon a colt the foal of an ass. (9:9; John 12:12–15)

I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. (11:13; Matt 27:3–7)

They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn ... as one mourneth for *his* only son ... *his* firstborn. (12:10)

What *are* these wounds in thine hands? ... He shall answer, *Those* with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. (13:6)

His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives ... and the mount of Olives <will be split in two>. (14:3–4)

Prophecies of latter-days to be fulfilled before Second Coming

(10:6–8) The people of Judah and Joseph will be gathered, and the people of Ephraim will become mighty. The Lord will "hiss," or call, for his people and gather them.

(12:2–3, 8–9) A great war will be fought in and around Jerusalem, but the Lord will intervene and save the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

(14:8; Ezek 47) Living waters will flow from the temple in Jerusalem and will heal the Dead Sea and the Judean wilderness.

Prophecies to be fulfilled when the Savior comes

(13:2) False idols, unclean spirits, and false prophets destroyed.

(14:5) The righteous who are alive on earth will be caught up to meet the Savior. The righteous who have died will be resurrected and will also be caught up to meet him (see also D&C 88:96–98).

(14:9) The Lord will be king over all the earth and will rule during the Millennium.

(14:12–13; Mal 3:13–18; 4:1–3) The wicked will be destroyed, and the righteous will be spared.

5. Ezra, scribes, scriptures, and Aramaic

Jews in exile learned the language (Aramaic) and culture of Babylon. Before and after the exile, scribes were educated record keepers and copyists. After the exile, Ezra and other scribes preserved the Old Testament in Hebrew using the Aramaic script. Before Ezra returned to Jerusalem, the Persian king commissioned him to teach God's laws and to appoint judges so law breakers would be punished (Ezra 7:25–26). At the start of a new year, Ezra read the Law for 5 to 6 hours in the presence of men and women at the temple. The Levites read from the Law and gave the meaning in Aramaic so the people could understand what was being read. (Neh 8:1–8)

"Ezra's Persian commission, his priestly lineage, and his scribal status allowed him to function as a reformer in Jerusalem, restoring, at least as he understood it, the Mosaic law to premiere status in Judah. ... Some traditions attribute the editing of much of the Hebrew Bible to him; others, emphasizing the priority he gave the law, depict him as a second Moses. As priest and scribe he certainly set an agenda for an exclusive, tradition-based, conservative approach to life, Temple, priesthood, scripture, and the study of the Mosaic law in Jewish religion." (JWOT 368–369)

6. Nehemiah rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem

When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, he inspired the leaders to rebuild the walls and gates of Jerusalem. The Samaritan governor got angry and plotted against Jerusalem. Aware of the plot, half of the men worked on the wall <while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows, and armor. . . . Each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked> (Neh 4:16–18). When their enemies invited Nehemiah to meet in a village, Nehemiah said, “I *am* doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?” (Neh 6:2–3)

Brigham Young: With laborers on the walls, holding the sword in one hand to protect themselves from the mob, while they placed the stone and moved the trowel with the other, the Kirtland temple . . . was . . . completed. (*JD* 2:31; *DBY*, 415)

Brigham Young: We had to build the [Nauvoo] Temple with the trowel in one hand and the sword in the other, and mobs were upon us all the while, and many crying out, ‘Oh! the Temple can’t be built.’ I told them it should be built. (*WW*, 320)

7. Malachi, last of the Jewish Prophets

“The completion of the Second Temple (515 BCE) had been followed by disillusionment over the anticipated prosperity announced by Haggai in 520 BCE, by consequent indifference to worship, skepticism as to divine justice, and moral laxity. In view of these conditions, the message of Malachi is to reassert the true relation of the people to their God, and to recall the nation to religious and moral earnestness, especially in regard to questions of ritual and marriage. . . . The three main abuses attacked in the text are the degeneracy of the priesthood (1:6–2:9), intermarriage with foreign women (2:11), and the people’s remissness in the payment of tithes (3:8).” (*EJ*- Malachi)

I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord . . . shall suddenly come to his temple. (*Mal* 3:1)

John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord’s mortal ministry, and Joseph Smith is the messenger who prepared the way for the Second Coming (see Matthew 11:10; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:193–95, 3:10–14).

I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. (*Mal* 4:5–6; 3 *Ne* 25:5–6; *D&C* 128:17)

I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. ² And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. ³ If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming. (*D&C* 2:1–3; *JS-H* 1:38–39)

“Fathers” in this verse refers to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see *D&C* 27:10; 132:29–37). In a talk given to the Provo Temple workers, Elder McConkie stated: “First I shall explain who the fathers were. The fathers were three in number. There is a general sense in which revelations came to several ancestors that bear on the subject, or at least allude to it, but the fathers within the meaning of this passage are three in number: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our ancestors.” (*MM* #48)

This prophecy was fulfilled when Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple, restoring the keys of the sealing power. (*D&C* 110:13–16)

“Malachi was considered the last of the prophets, along with Haggai and Zechariah. Upon their death, the spirit of prophecy departed from Israel.” (*EJ*- Malachi)

8. Scribes

Scribes assumed a new role as teachers of the Law. They read scriptures to the people in Hebrew and then translated and explained them in Aramaic. They were later called lawyers, doctors, elders, and rabbis. “Once the true prophet has been duly rejected and passed to his reward, swarms of experts descend upon his words to begin the learned business of exegesis [drawing meaning out of the written word]. The words of the dead prophets become the peculiar possession of armies of specially trained and carefully conditioned scholars.” (*Nibley-World*, 24–25.)

Oral traditions: The commentaries, explanations, interpretations, and inferences became known as oral tradition. In time, these traditions, written and oral, took on so much importance that they often overshadowed the law. Later the oral tradition was written and called the Talmud which consists of the Mishnah (c. AD 200) and the Gemara (c. AD 500). The Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud are records of the oral traditions developed in different places. Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and other religious groups originated during this time as a result of differences in interpretation among experts competing for disciples.

9. Synagogues

Jewish synagogues took on new importance. “The Exiles, deprived of the Temple, in a strange land, feeling the need for consolation in their distress, would meet from time to time, probably on Sabbaths, and read the Scriptures” (*EJ* Synagogue). *Synagogue* is a word of Greek origin that was used in the Greek Septuagint to translate several Hebrew words for *assembly, camp, community, and congregation*. The prefix *syn* means together and *agō* means to gather. Some scholars suggest that biblical references to “holy convocations” (*Lev* 23:4; 1 *Kings* 8:28ff; 2 *Kings* 4:23; *Isaiah* 4:5) are early hints of the origins of *synagogues*. Others suggest that the *synagogues* originated when Josiah destroyed all local shrines and centralized all worship at the temple in Jerusalem. “The need to commune with the Deity and the difficulty involved in long pilgrimages to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the Temple brought about meetings for public worship, without sacrifices, on certain days. . . .” (*Gutman*, 73). Other scholars believe that synagogues originated during or after the Babylonian exile.

“The Book of Mormon . . . lends credence to the idea that synagogues, at least as places of worship, were known to Israel before the departure of Lehi from Jerusalem. . . . While most scholars focus their attention on the development of the synagogue in postexilic Israel, . . . [some well respected scholars] discuss the preexilic origins of the synagogue. . . . Jacob Weingreen writes: ‘It would be natural to suppose that, following upon the enforcement of Josiah’s edict, religious services continued to be held outside Jerusalem, but now without sacrifices. . . . These must . . . have constituted the basis of the synagogue service of later times.’” (*John W. Welch*, “Synagogues in the Book of Mormon”, <http://mi.byu.edu>)

10. Greek Science and Philosophy

“Athens became the chief intellectual centre of Greece. . . . From . . . Socrates [469–399 BC] onwards . . . important thinkers either were born at Athens or spent a considerable part of their lives there, and in the fourth century this development was accentuated when first Plato [428–347 BC] and then Aristotle [384–322 BC] founded schools—the Academy and the Lyceum—that attracted

philosophers and scientists from all over Greece” (*Greek Science*, 66). The Roman Empire adopted and built on the foundation of classical Greek philosophy.

In Plato’s Academy and Aristotle’s Lyceum, students studied physics (the seen world; science), metaphysics (the unseen world; theology), ethics (what is good; morality), and epistemology (how we know; logic). They learned the academically correct answers to the questions of their time.

Ancient Greek philosophers agreed that there could be only one God who must be without body, parts, and passions. Anyone who believed in more than one God or a God with body, parts, or passions was unlearned and mocked. Jews outside of Jerusalem defended Hebrew scripture by reinterpretation. Philo (20 BC–AD 50), a Jew who studied Greek philosophy in Alexandria, defended Jewish scripture. If a literal interpretation of scripture was not academically correct, he interpreted it figuratively or allegorically. “Greeks looked on the traditions, customs, and religion of the Jews as primitive, archaic, and barbaric; they set about to ‘enlighten’ them. ... The intoxicating influence of the heady Greek philosophy and materialism soon penetrated the upper strata of Jewish society. ... When Antiochus IV ... came to power in 175 BC, ... he attempted to destroy the religion of the Jews by imposing the Greek religion. He built a gymnasium in Jerusalem and introduced Greek philosophy, drama, and education. Most of the upper classes of the Jewish population accepted this change with little problem. They had the most to gain from friendly relations with the Gentiles and the most to lose should the wrath of their rulers be kindled. But most of the population saw these trends as alarming abandonments of their religion. (OT-I K-4)

11. Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes

Sadducees: The Sadducees were from the upper level of society: priests, merchants, and aristocrats. ... It was largely among this wealthy class that acceptance of the Greek culture was taking place; thus, the Sadducees were not popular with the majority of the people. ... Unlike the Pharisees, the Sadducees rejected the oral law as binding except for that part that was based strictly on the Torah. Further, they denied the afterlife and, therefore, the Resurrection. The purpose of keeping the law was for divine assistance in mortality. Their theology tended to bring God down to man, and the worship offered Him was not unlike the homage paid to a human ruler. His law was to be strictly interpreted. No symbolic or allegorical interpretation, a favorite of the Pharisees, was allowed. (OT-I K-5)

Pharisees: Deeply alarmed by the growing abandonment of the traditional values of Judaism, more and more of the population began to look with favor upon the Hasidim [“the holy ones”], who seemed to be the only ones interested in preserving the religion. A major group began to form around the Hasidim, dedicating themselves to the preservation of the Mosaic code. To counteract the Greek influences they turned to a strict, almost rigid, obedience to the law. Because of their attempts to keep themselves separate from the worldly taint of false ideas, this group began to be called the *powrashim*, ... which means “to be separated.” Thus evolved the name *Pharisees*. ... Because of their appeal to the majority of the population, the Pharisees constituted a much larger group than the Sadducees and had more support from the people, a fact that held true even until the time of the Savior. ... The Pharisees sought to undermine the religious authority of the Sadducees, which was based on their exclusive priestly domination of the temple. To weaken this control, the Pharisees advocated taking certain ceremonies, previously

associated exclusively with the temple, and practicing them in the home. In addition, formal places of worship, the synagogue, were set up that promulgated and perpetuated their doctrine. It was in this way that learned men of other than priestly descent began to play a role in national religious affairs. (OT-I K-5)

The Pharisees established schools and synagogues everywhere and enjoined “each father to see that his son was instructed in the Law.” The Sadducees represented the priesthood and the interests of the Temple. The Pharisees believed “the spiritual life of the people should be centered in the Torah and the Synagogue. While the Sadducean priesthood prided itself upon its aristocracy of blood ... , the Pharisees created an aristocracy of learning. ... They added new restrictions to the Biblical law ... to keep the people at a safe distance from forbidden ground; as they termed it, ‘they made a fence around the Law.’ ... With the destruction of the Temple [in AD 70] the Sadducees disappeared altogether, leaving the regulation of all Jewish affairs in the hands of the Pharisees. Henceforth Jewish life was regulated by the teachings of the Pharisees; the whole history of Judaism was reconstructed from the Pharisaic point of view, and a new aspect was given to the Sanhedrin of the past. A new chain of tradition supplanted the older, priestly tradition. Pharisaism shaped the character of Judaism and the life and thought of the Jew for all the future.” (see “Pharisees,” www.jewishencyclopedia.com)

“The Pharisees conceived of God as an omnipotent spiritual Being, all-wise, all-knowing, all-just, and all-merciful. ... Since God was transcendent, He could not be comprehended in anthropomorphic terms, nor could His totality of being be designated with a name. ... The Torah God gave to Moses consisted of the Written and the Oral Law. ... The Torah ... was the center of their teachings and sufficient for all men and all times. ... Its commandments were to be interpreted in conformity with the standard and interpretation of the rabbis of each generation, and to be made to harmonize with advanced ideas. ...

The Pharisees believed that since God was everywhere. He could be worshiped both in and outside the Temple, and was not to be invoked by sacrifices alone. They thus fostered the synagogue as a place of worship, study, and prayer, and raised it to a central and important place in the life of the people which rivaled the Temple.” (*EJ*- Pharisees)

Essenes: The idea of separation from society to avoid religious impurity went so far with some people that it led to the formation of another sect, known as Essenes. ... Interest in this group was acutely aroused in the late 1940s because of the discovery of their sacred writings, known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, at Qumran. This sect varied only in degree from the Pharisees. ... The Essenes believed the Pharisees did not go far enough in their attempts to separate themselves from the world. They separated themselves literally as well as spiritually, setting up communities in such isolated areas as the shores of the Dead Sea, where they could completely escape the world. (OT-I K-6)

12. Purposes of Messianic Prophecies

Bruce R. McConkie: There are three reasons why Messianic prophecies began with Adam and continued among all the righteous people. ...

(1) Messianic prophecies enabled those who lived from the beginning down to the time of his coming to have faith in Christ and thereby gain salvation. ...

(2) Messianic prophecies enable those who lived at the time of and after the coming of Christ to believe that it was he of whom the prophets had spoken so that they too might be saved. ...

(3) Messianic prophecies reveal the manner and system of prophetic utterance and fulfillment so that the prophecies relative to the Second Coming may be understood, thus enabling men to prepare for that great day and the salvation that attends it.” (Promised Messiah, 28)

13. Isaiah prophecies of Christ’s mission

¹ The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound;

Good tidings → deliverance from physical & spiritual bondage
Bind up → heal

Proclaim liberty → free slaves in Jubilee year (Lev 25:10)

² To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God;

In Nazareth, Jesus read from Isaiah in the synagogue on the Sabbath: “The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,¹⁹ To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.²⁰ And he closed the book. ...²¹ And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. “ (Lk 4:18–21)

to comfort all that mourn;

³ To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them <a crown of> beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of <despair>;

crown of beauty → crowned joint heirs

Israelites anointed selves with oil and put on garments of praise (52:1) before festivities and in times of happiness and prosperity (Eccl 9:8; Ps 45:8) (P-Isa)

that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

14. John the Baptist teaches about Christ’s mission

John the ... [Baptist preached]³ the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;⁴ As it is written in the book of the *prophet* Esaias ... saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight.⁵ *For ... he shall come, as it is written in the book of the prophets, to take away the sins of the world, and to bring salvation unto the heathen nations, to gather together those who are lost, who are of the sheepfold of Israel;*⁶ *Yea, even the dispersed and afflicted; and also to ... make possible the preaching of the gospel unto the Gentiles;*⁷ *And to be a light unto all who sit in darkness, unto the uttermost parts of the earth; to bring to pass the resurrection from the dead, and to ascend up on high, to dwell on the right hand of the Father.*⁸ *Until the fulness of time, and the law and the testimony shall be sealed, and the keys of the kingdom shall be delivered up again unto the Father;*⁹ *To administer justice unto all; to come down in judgment upon all, and to convince all the ungodly of their ungodly deeds, which they have committed; and all this in the day that he shall come;*¹⁰ *For it is a day of power; yea, every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth;*¹¹ And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. (JST, Luke 3:4–11)

15. John the revelator teaches of the premortal Christ

¹ In the beginning was the *gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God.*² The same was in the beginning with God.³ All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made which was made. ...¹⁴ And the same word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (JST John 1:1–14)

Quotes

1. Richard L. Evans: Some of the brethren ... approached [President Wilford Woodruff] and ... inquired of him as to when he felt the end would be—when would be the coming of the Master? These ... words ... convey the spirit of his reported reply: ‘I would live as if it were to be tomorrow—but I am still planting cherry trees!’ ... In worrying about things that are beyond our reach, we should not overlook our opportunities with our own families and friends; in worrying about possible eventualities we should not neglect the things that need to be done here and now, and that are within our reach. (Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 105–6)

2. Boyd K. Packer: Their defense was simple and effective: “We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them” (Ezra 4:9) and then went about the work. And that is what we should do—go about our work, strengthen the wards and the stakes, the quorums and the families and the individual members. *We have a work to do. Why should it cease while we do battle with our enemies? Brethren, set a watch and make a prayer and go about the work of the Lord. Do not be drawn away to respond to enemies. In a word, ignore them.* (Ensign, Aug. 1983, 68)

3. Neal A. Maxwell: “In a way LDS scholars at BYU and elsewhere are a little bit like the builders of the temple in Nauvoo, who worked with a trowel in one hand and a musket in the other. Today scholars building the temple of learning must also pause on occasion to defend the Kingdom. I personally think this is one of the reasons the Lord established and maintains this University. The dual role of builder and defender is unique and ongoing. I am grateful we have scholars today who can handle, as it were, both trowels and muskets.”

(quoted by Cecil O. Samuelson, President of BYU, “Stand by My Servant Joseph”, BYU Devotional, 18 Jan 2005, speeches.byu.edu)

4. Thomas S. Monson: The poet wrote: “I walked today where Jesus walked And felt Him close to me!” We need not visit the Holy Land to feel him close to us. We need not walk by the shores of Galilee or among the Judean hills to walk where Jesus walked. In a very real sense, all can walk where Jesus walked when, with his words on our lips, his spirit in our hearts, and his teachings in our lives, we journey through mortality. (Ensign, May 1974, 48)

5. Gordon B. Hinckley: Now, do not get me wrong. I am not here to say that if you pay an honest tithing you will realize your dream of a fine house, a Rolls Royce, and a condominium in Hawaii. The Lord will open the windows of heaven according to our need, and not according to our greed. If we are paying tithing to get rich, we are doing it for the wrong reason. The basic purpose for tithing is to provide the Church with the means needed to carry on His work. (Ensign, May 1982, 40)

6. Ezra Taft Benson: The Savior’s “coming will be both glorious and terrible, depending on the spiritual condition of those who remain.” (“Prepare Yourself for the Great Day of the Lord,” *New Era*, May 1982, 49)