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THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE LAST DAYS: An Honest Covenant Evaluation

Where the NT Confirms the Tanakh, Where It Diverges, and What the Covenant Framework Requires Us to Say

SECTION I: THE FOUNDATIONAL QUESTIONS — WHAT HONESTY REQUIRES

Miqdash Bethel speaks from the Tanakh as its sole doctrinal authority. Everything after the Torah is commentary. That position requires this study to begin by naming what the research has established about the New Testament as a documentary record — without hostility and without apology, but with the honesty that the covenant demands.

The Manuscript Reality

The original autographs — the actual written documents produced by the NT writers — do not exist. Not one. The earliest surviving NT fragment is the Ryland Papyrus P52, a small portion of the Gospel of John dating to approximately 125-138 CE — roughly 30-40 years after the document was written. The oldest complete NT manuscript, Codex Sinaiticus, dates to approximately 350 CE — three centuries after the events it describes. The NT text we have today was reconstructed by scholars comparing approximately 5,800 surviving Greek manuscripts against each other, and those manuscripts contain more than 400,000 documented variant readings between them.

This does not mean the NT is fraudulent or unreliable in all of its content. It does mean that any claim of verbal, letter-perfect divine authority for the NT text must reckon with a manuscript tradition that is by definition several steps removed from whatever was originally written, by anonymous scribes, over centuries, with documented alterations, additions, and deletions. The Masoretic text of the Tanakh, by contrast, was preserved by a scribal tradition that was itself a covenant obligation — men who counted every letter of every scroll and began again if they made an error. The Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed this fidelity: the Great Isaiah Scroll, dating to 150 BCE, is nearly identical to the Masoretic text copied 1,000 years later.

The Language Question

The NT was written in Koine Greek — the common commercial language of the Roman Empire, not the sacred tongue of the Hebrew covenant. Of the 27 books, not one survives in Hebrew. The claim that Matthew was originally written in Hebrew comes from a second-century tradition recorded by Papias — but no such Hebrew Matthew has ever been found, and Jerome, who went to Palestine specifically to find it, ultimately translated his Latin version from the canonical Greek. Some scholars argue convincingly that the Book of Revelation's unusual Greek — full of Hebraisms, grammatical irregularities, and Semitic idioms — points to a Hebrew original that was mechanically translated into Greek. If true, this is significant. But it remains a minority scholarly position, not an established fact.

What this means for the covenant reader: when the NT cites the Hebrew scriptures, it is almost always citing the Septuagint — the Greek translation of the Tanakh made in Alexandria in the 3rd-2nd centuries BCE — rather than the Hebrew original. Some of the NT's most important prophetic claims rest on Septuagint translations that diverge in significant ways from the Hebrew Masoretic text. The famous Yeshayahu 7:14 passage — 'a virgin shall conceive' — is a Septuagint rendering of the Hebrew *almah* (young woman) as *parthenos* (virgin). The Hebrew text does not say virgin. The LXX does. The NT argument builds on the LXX. This is a documented fact, not anti-Christian polemic.

The Canon Question

The 27 books currently in the NT canon were not universally accepted in the first three centuries of the Christian movement. The Book of Revelation was rejected by the Council of Laodicea (363 CE), questioned by Eusebius of Caesarea in the 4th century, resisted in the Eastern Church until the 15th century, and called 'neither apostolic nor prophetic' by Martin Luther in his 1522 preface. The letter to the Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2-3 John, and Jude were all disputed for their apostolic authenticity. The NT canon in its current 27-book form first appears in a single letter written by Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, in 367 CE — over three centuries after the death of the first disciples.

The first person to propose a formal Christian canon was Marcion of Sinope, around 140 CE — a man who was subsequently declared a heretic. His canon included only Paul's letters and a heavily edited version of Luke, because he rejected the Hebrew scriptures entirely, believing the God of Jesus and the God of the Tanakh were different beings. The canonical process that followed was in large part a reaction to Marcion — an effort to demonstrate continuity with the Hebrew scriptures that Marcion had discarded. The irony is profound: the impulse to reject the Tanakh produced a counter-movement that enshrined it — but through the lens of a new theological framework that had never existed in the original Hebrew covenant tradition.

The Covenant Position of Miqdash Bethel

Miqdash Bethel does not declare the NT to be a deliberate forgery or a conspiracy. What can be said with intellectual honesty is this: the NT is a collection of documents written in a foreign language, with no surviving originals, assembled by ecclesiastical councils over three centuries, containing extensive use of the Tanakh (primarily through the Septuagint translation), interpreted through a theological framework — the sacrificial atonement of a divine-human Messiah — that has no clear precedent in the Torah or the Nevi'im as the Hebrew tradition reads them. Whether this framework is true is the central theological question. Whether it was present in the original Hebrew covenant text is demonstrably not so. The NT builds on the Tanakh. It is not the same as the Tanakh. The distinction matters enormously for covenant readers.

SECTION II: WHAT IS GENUINE — NT PASSAGES THAT FAITHFULLY CARRY TANAKH END-TIME MATERIAL

With the foundational questions established, this section examines the NT passages about the last days and asks of each: does this faithfully transmit what the Tanakh already said? Where it does, the covenant reader can receive it as confirmation. Where it does not, the discrepancy must be named.

The Olivet Discourse — Mattityahu (Matthew) 24, Markos (Mark) 13, Lukas (Luke) 21

The Olivet Discourse — the extended teaching attributed to Yeshua on the Mount of Olives concerning the destruction of the Temple and the end of the age — is the most significant block of end-time teaching in the NT Gospels. It is recorded in three versions across Matthew, Mark, and Luke, with significant differences between them that have generated centuries of debate.

The Tanakh material it draws on is extensive and largely accurate:

Dani'el 9:27 / 11:31 / 12:11 — The Abomination of Desolation. Matthew 24:15 directly names 'the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Dani'el.' The Greek *shiquts eremon* translates the Hebrew *shiquts meshomem*. The reference is legitimate. The question of whether it applies to the 70 CE destruction of the Temple, to a future event, or to both is unresolved — but the citation of Dani'el is accurate.

Dani'el 12:1 — 'A time of distress unlike any other.' Matthew 24:21: 'For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.' This is a near-verbatim echo of Dani'el 12:1. The Tanakh basis is solid.

Yeshayahu 13:10 and Yo'el 2:10 / 2:31 — The darkening of sun and moon. Matthew 24:29: 'The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from

heaven.' This directly cites imagery from Yeshayahu 13:10 and Yo'el 2:10 and 2:31. The Tanakh basis is solid.

Zekhariah 12:10-14 — Mourning when they see Him whom they pierced. Matthew 24:30: 'All the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven.' The mourning echoes Zekhariah 12:12-14. The 'coming on clouds' imagery echoes Dani'el 7:13 — the 'one like a Son of Man' coming with the clouds of heaven. The Tanakh basis is solid. The application to Yeshua as that 'Son of Man' is the theological argument of the NT — an argument from within the Tanakh texts, whether or not one accepts the identification.

Dani'el 7:13 — The Son of Man on clouds. Matthew 24:30, Mark 13:26, and Luke 21:27 all describe 'the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.' This is direct citation of Dani'el 7:13. The Tanakh basis is solid. Ben Adam in Aramaic — literally 'son of man' — appears in Dani'el's night vision. Whether this figure is individual or collective, whether it is the Messiah figure or the covenant community of Yisra'el is the interpretive question. The Tanakh text is being cited; it is not being invented.

Devarim 30 / Yeshayahu 27:13 — The regathering of the elect. Matthew 24:31: 'He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.' The 'great trumpet' calling the scattered to return appears in Yeshayahu 27:13. The ingathering from the four winds echoes Zekhariah 2:6 and Yehezkel 37:9. The Tanakh basis is solid.

Overall assessment of the Olivet Discourse: it is the NT passage most faithful to the Tanakh end-time framework. Its primary sources are Dani'el, Yeshayahu, Zekhariah, and Yo'el — all correctly cited, accurately translated, and applied with awareness of their original contexts. A covenant reader of the Tanakh can receive this material as genuine engagement with the prophetic tradition, even while reserving judgment on the theological claims built upon it.

The 1 Thessalonians 4-5 Passage — The 'Day of the Lord'

Sha'ul (Paul) writing to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 addresses the coming of the Day of the Lord:

'For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.' — 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

The 'Day of the Lord' — Yom Yahweh — is a Tanakh phrase appearing in Amos 5:18-20, Yo'el 1:15, 2:1, 2:11, 2:31, Tsefanyah (Zephaniah) 1:14-18, Malakhi 4:5, and Yeshayahu 2:12. The

concept of a day of cosmic judgment, divine intervention, and vindication of the righteous belongs entirely to the Tanakh framework. The Tanakh basis is solid.

However: the specific concept of living believers being 'caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air' — what later Christian theology calls 'the Rapture' — has no clear Tanakh parallel. The ingathering prophecies of Yeshayahu 27, Yirmeyahu 31, and Yehezkel 36-37 all describe gathering to the land, not gathering to the clouds. Eliyahu's ascent in 2 Kings 2 is the only individual 'catching up' in the Tanakh, and that was unique to him. The Rapture concept as developed in later Christian theology is a NT construction not attested in the Tanakh text.

2 Thessalonians 2 — The Man of Lawlessness

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 describes 'the man of lawlessness' who 'exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.' This has obvious parallels with Dani'el 11:36-37 — 'the king will do as he pleases; he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods.' The Tanakh basis for the concept of a supreme arrogant ruler desecrating the holy place is solid — Antiochus IV Epiphanes fulfilled part of it, and Dani'el's sealed text may hold further fulfillment.

However: the phrase 'the man of sin' as a distinct eschatological figure — the Antichrist of later Christian theology — is developed far beyond anything the Tanakh states. The Tanakh warns repeatedly about false prophets, corrupt kings, and nations that turn against Yahweh's covenant. It does not develop a singular, diabolically empowered 'Antichrist' figure in the way that 1 John 2:18 and 2 Thessalonians 2 describe. The seeds of the concept are in the Tanakh. The fully developed theology is not.

2 Peter 3 — 'The Day of the Lord Will Come Like a Thief'

2 Peter 3:10-13: 'The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.' The 'heavens and earth passing away' language echoes Yeshayahu 34:4 and Yeshayahu 65:17 — 'For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth.' The cosmic renewal described is Tanakh-grounded. The 'thief in the night' metaphor for the unexpected coming of Yom Yahweh echoes Amos 5:18-20 — the day coming as darkness, not light, for those who are unprepared. The Tanakh basis is adequate.

Ivrim / Hebrews 12 — The Shaking of Heaven and Earth

Hebrews 12:26-27 cites Haggai 2:6: 'Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.' The author uses this to describe the eschatological removal of created things. The

Haggai citation is accurate. The cosmic shaking as end-time imagery is present in Hoshea (Hosea), Yoel, Yirmeyahu, Yeshayahu, and Yehezkel. The Tanakh basis is solid.

SECTION III: THE BOOK OF REVELATION — THE MOST DIFFICULT CASE

The Book of Revelation — Higgayon Yochanan in some Hebrew manuscript traditions — is the most complex and disputed document in the entire NT canon. It is also the document that most extensively uses the Tanakh as its source material. The research findings here are significant enough to require full transparency.

The Documentary Evidence

The Book of Revelation was the last book accepted into the NT canon. The Council of Laodicea in 363 CE excluded it. Martin Luther called it 'neither apostolic nor prophetic' in 1522. Eusebius, the 4th-century church historian, listed it among the 'disputed books.' The Eastern Orthodox Church resisted it until the 15th century. These are historical facts, not anti-Christian arguments. The most widely used book in popular end-time prophecy teaching was, for centuries, the most disputed book in the NT.

The authorship is unknown. The text says only 'John,' and the early tradition attributed it to John the Apostle. Most modern scholars — including conservative ones — believe it was written by a different 'John of Patmos,' a Jewish-Christian prophet active in Asia Minor in the 90s CE during the reign of the Emperor Domitian. The author was almost certainly a Hebrew-speaking Jew immersed in the Tanakh.

The Tanakh DNA of Revelation — What Is Genuinely There

The single most important finding from the research is this: the Book of Revelation draws more extensively from the Old Testament than any other NT document — and not one verse of it contains a direct quotation. Every reference is allusion, echo, and creative reweaving. Three independent scholarly witnesses establish the scope:

Witness 1 — Ranko Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation (Andrews University Press, 2nd ed., 2009): Stefanovic documents 505 citations and allusions to the OT across 28 of the 39 books, with over 325 drawn from the prophetic literature — Yeshayahu, Yirmeyahu, Yehezkel, and Dani'el heading the list. Among the Minor Prophets, Zekhariah, Yoel, Amos, and Hoshea appear most frequently.

Witness 2 — G.K. Beale, The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text (Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1999) and **The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Book of Revelation** (University Press of America, 1984): Beale, working from the

Westcott-Hort critical apparatus, identifies Dani'el as yielding the most allusions in proportion to its length, while Yehezkel provides the structural backbone for much of the book's vision sequence. Scholar H.B. Swete's earlier analysis (*The Apocalypse of St. John*, Macmillan, 1909) lists 31 references to Dani'el, 29 to Yehezkel, 46 to Yeshayahu, and 27 to Tehillim — confirming that more than half of all Revelation's allusions come from just four Hebrew books.

Witness 3 — NT scholar Steve Moyise, using the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament index, demonstrated that 'Revelation contains more Old Testament allusions than any other New Testament book, but it does not record a single quotation' (cited in Paulien, *Westminster Theological Journal*, 2000). Ian Boxall (Oxford) further argues that Yehezkel provides the structural 'backbone' of Revelation, sequencing most of its chapters in deliberate correspondence to the chapters of Yehezkel — though reordered for John's own theological purposes.

These three witnesses — Stefanovic, Beale/Swete, and Moyise — establish beyond reasonable scholarly dispute that Yehezkel is the most structurally influential single source in Revelation, with Dani'el yielding the highest density of allusions per verse. Together with Zekhariah, Yeshayahu, Tehillim, and Yo'el, these form the entire foundation of the book. Yehezkel is referenced in Revelation more than in any other NT document. The second densest source is Dani'el.

Specific examples of direct Tanakh derivation:

The Four Horsemen (Revelation 6:1-8) — A Full Covenant Examination.

Of all the imagery in the Book of Revelation, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are the most recognized in Western civilization. Dürer painted them in 1498. They appear in poetry, literature, and film. Every Christian tradition has interpreted them. They are treated here with the full weight they deserve — because when you trace every element of the vision back to its source, you discover that not a single component was invented by John of Patmos. Every horse, every rider, every instrument of judgment was already present in the Hebrew prophets, centuries before the vision on Patmos.

The Tanakh Source — Two Visions in Zekhariah

The direct source for the Four Horsemen is Zekhariah (Zechariah), a prophet writing in the post-exilic period around 520-518 BCE. He received two distinct visions of colored horses that together provide the entire framework John draws upon:

Zekhariah 1:8-11 — The First Vision. In the night, Zekhariah sees a man riding a red horse, standing among myrtle trees in a ravine, with red, sorrel, and white horses behind him. An angel interprets: 'These are they whom Yahweh has sent to patrol the earth.' The horses report back:

'We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest.' These are not military forces — they are Yahweh's divine agents of reconnaissance, surveying the condition of the nations.

Zekhariah 6:1-8 — The Eighth Vision. Zekhariah now sees four chariots coming out from between two bronze mountains, each pulled by horses of different colors: red, black, white, and dappled (spotted). The angel interprets explicitly: 'These are the four spirits of heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of all the earth.' Here the horses are no longer scouts — they are sent out in active judgment. The black horses go north. The white horses follow. The dappled go south. The angel declares: 'Those going toward the north have given My Spirit rest in the land of the north' — judgment has been executed.

The connections between Zekhariah's vision and John's Four Horsemen are unmistakable: four horses of distinct colors, acting as divine agents, going out to the whole earth, executing Yahweh's sovereign will. John's vision is built on this foundation. However, there is one critical difference scholars consistently note: in Zekhariah, the horses are agents of reconnaissance and then judgment on behalf of Yahweh's covenant — they serve the restoration of Yisra'el. In Revelation, the horses are released as seals are broken by the Lamb, and their scope is the entire world. John takes the Tanakh framework and expands it into a cosmic eschatological drama.

The Second Source — Yehezkel's Four Severe Judgments

The specific content of what each horseman brings — the sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts — is not from Zekhariah. It comes directly from Yehezkel (Ezekiel) 14:21, one of the most sobering declarations in all of the Nevi'im:

'For thus says the Lord Yahweh: How much more when I send My four severe judgments against Yerushalayim — sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence — to cut off from it man and beast!' — Yehezkel 14:21

This verse is the precise vocabulary John uses for the Four Horsemen and especially the fourth — the pale horse of Death, whose rider is given authority 'to kill with sword, famine, plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth' (Revelation 6:8). The four instruments are identical. Yehezkel uses this formula repeatedly throughout his prophetic ministry: sword, famine, pestilence, and beasts appear together in Yehezkel 5:17, 14:12-21, 33:27, and Yirmeyahu 14:12, 21:7, 24:10. This is a fixed covenant formula for Yahweh's comprehensive judgment — not a NT invention. John is citing the Tanakh's own established language for divine judgment.

Each Horseman — The Tanakh Evidence

The First Horseman — White Horse, Bow, Crown, Conquest (Revelation 6:1-2). The white horse is the most debated of the four among Christian interpreters, with centuries of disagreement about whether it represents Christ (as in Revelation 19:11), the gospel spreading, a conquering empire, or the Antichrist. The bow without mention of arrows echoes Tehillim (Psalm) 45:5 — 'Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies.' Zekhariah 9:13 and 10:4 use the bow as the symbol of Yahweh's covenant victory. The crown (stephanos — a victor's wreath, not a royal diadem) signals a military conqueror. The ambiguity is deliberate and genuine: John provides no interpretation here, unlike the angel who interprets Zekhariah's horses. The Tanakh framework of the conquering divine agent on a white horse is solid; the specific identification is left open.

The Second Horseman — Red Horse, Great Sword, Removal of Peace (Revelation 6:3-4). This horseman is given power 'to take peace from the earth, and that people should slay one another.' The red color — representing blood and carnage — appears in Zekhariah's first vision (the red horse leading the patrol). The 'great sword' is the cherev gedolah, Yahweh's sword of judgment found throughout the Tanakh: Yeshayahu 27:1 ('Yahweh will punish Leviathan with His hard and great and strong sword'), Yermiyahu 47:6 ('O sword of Yahweh, how long will you not be quiet?'). The removal of peace from the earth echoes Yehezkel 7:25 — 'Disaster comes upon disaster; rumor follows rumor. They seek a vision from the prophet, but the Torah perishes from the priest and counsel from the elders.' Peace being taken from the earth as a covenant judgment is Tanakh from beginning to end.

The Third Horseman — Black Horse, Scales, Famine Prices (Revelation 6:5-6). The black horse's rider holds a pair of scales — the instrument of commerce — and a voice announces: 'A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius' — a day's wages for a day's minimal food. This is precisely the condition of covenant famine judgment described in Yirmeyahu 52:6 (the siege of Yerushalayim: 'the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people'), Yehezkel 4:10-17 (Yehezkel commanded to eat bread by weight during the symbolic siege), and Aykhah (Lamentations) 5:10: 'Our skin is hot as an oven with the burning heat of famine.' The voice adds: 'do not harm the oil and the wine' — the covenant blessings of the land are being rationed but not entirely withheld, a detail that reflects the Tanakh pattern of partial rather than total judgment in the earlier covenant warnings. Black as the color of famine appears in Aykhah 4:8 — the faces of the survivors are 'black as soot.'

The Fourth Horseman — Pale Horse, Death and Hades, Quarter of the Earth (Revelation 6:7-8). The Greek word for 'pale' is chloros — the same word used for the color of grass. John MacArthur observes it describes 'the pale, ashen-green pallor characteristic of the decomposition of a corpse.' This is the most explicitly Tanakh-grounded of the four: the rider is named Death, with Hades following — and his instruments are 'sword, famine, plague, and wild

beasts of the earth.' These are the four severe judgments of Yehezkel 14:21, word for word. The scope — a quarter of the earth — escalates beyond Yehezkel's immediate application to Yerushalayim into a global judgment framework, which is consistent with John's expansion of the covenant pattern to cosmic scale.

The Critical Distinction — Patrol vs. Judgment

Every serious scholar who has studied the relationship between Zekhariah and Revelation notes the same structural shift: in Zekhariah, the colored horses patrol and report, and their mission is ultimately oriented toward the restoration and comfort of Yisra'el. In Revelation, the same imagery is transformed into agents of active judgment on a cosmic scale, released by the Lamb through the breaking of seals. John is not merely repeating Zekhariah — he is developing the imagery in a specific theological direction: the judgment is universal, the authority belongs to the Lamb, and the scope is one-quarter of the entire earth. The Tanakh roots are genuine and deep. The theological application is distinctively NT.

For the covenant reader of the Tanakh: the Four Horsemen are built from the most solid Tanakh material in all of Revelation. The colored horses of Zekhariah, the four severe judgments of Yehezkel, the famine pricing of Yirmeyahu and Aykhah, the covenant sword of Yeshayahu — all of it was already there. John assembled it faithfully and expanded its scope. The Christian believer who loves the Four Horsemen is, without always knowing it, standing on Hebrew prophetic ground that goes back six centuries before the vision on Patmos.

The 144,000 sealed (Revelation 7:1-8) are sealed to protect them from destruction — drawn directly from Yehezkel 9:1-8, where those marked on their foreheads by the man in linen are protected from the coming judgment. The number and tribal structure echo the covenant census of Bamidbar (Numbers).

The Two Witnesses (Revelation 11:3-12) perform signs that echo Eliyahu (stopping rain — 1 Kings 17) and Moshe (turning water to blood — Shemot 7). Their 1,260 days parallel Dani'el's 'time, times, and half a time' (Dani'el 7:25, 12:7). The breath of life returning to them after three days echoes Yehezkel 37:10.

The Great Harlot (Revelation 17-18) is drawn from Yeshayahu's oracle against Tyre (Yeshayahu 23) and Yehezkel's oracle against Tyre (Yehezkel 26-28) — the great commercial city drunk on the wine of her fornication. In Yirmeyahu 51, Babylon is described in nearly identical terms. The image is composite Tanakh, applied to Rome.

The New Jerusalem (Revelation 21-22) is drawn almost entirely from Yehezkel 40-48 — the prophet transported to a high mountain, a heavenly messenger measuring the city, twelve gates named for the twelve tribes, the river of life flowing from the Temple. The specific dimensions,

the wall, the gates, the measuring — all Yehezkel. However, a critical divergence: in Yehezkel 40-48, the vision requires a Temple in the center of the city. Revelation 21:22 says 'I saw no temple in it, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.' Revelation explicitly reverses the centerpiece of Yehezkel's vision. This is not a faithful transmission — it is a reinterpretation that makes Yehezkel's Temple vision unnecessary within the NT theological framework.

Where Revelation Diverges from the Tanakh

The honest evaluation must identify three significant points where Revelation departs from the Tanakh framework:

First — The Sacrificial Lamb Theology. The opening vision of Revelation presents 'the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world' as the central figure of the eschatological drama. This sacrificial atonement theology — a divine being whose death accomplishes cosmic redemption — is not present in the Tanakh. The Torah's sacrificial system provided for the atonement of specific sins through specific offerings according to specific procedures. It never describes a single sacrifice that accomplishes permanent, universal redemption for all humanity. The concept is theological innovation built on the Tanakh, not derivation from it.

Second — The Divine Identity of the Mashiach. Revelation presents Yeshua as sharing the divine attributes of Yahweh — the Alpha and Omega (the first and last), the one who is and was and is to come, the one who holds the keys of death and Sheol. In Yeshayahu 44:6 and 48:12, these titles — 'the first and the last' — belong exclusively to Yahweh. Revelation applies them to Yeshua. This is the core theological claim of the NT that Judaism found impossible to accept: the elevation of a human being to co-equality with Yahweh. The Tanakh has no precedent for this. The Mashiach (Messiah) in the Tanakh is always a human figure — a king, a deliverer, a servant — never a co-equal divine being.

Third — The Temple's Irrelevance. Revelation 21:22 removes the Temple from the New Jerusalem entirely. This directly contradicts Yehezkel 40-48, which is the most detailed architectural vision of the restored Temple in all of the Tanakh — 9 full chapters of measurements, dimensions, courts, gates, and covenant service. If Yehezkel 40-48 describes the literal future Temple, Revelation 21:22 cannot also be literally true. They are incompatible. Revelation has reinterpreted Yehezkel's vision through a post-Temple, post-sacrifice theological lens.

The Jewish Apocalyptic Genre Question

One of the most important findings from the research is this: the Catholic Biblical Association's own introduction to Revelation states that it 'contains an account of visions in symbolic and

allegorical language borrowed extensively from the Old Testament, especially Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel' and belongs to the genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature that 'enjoyed wide popularity in both Jewish and Christian circles from approximately 200 BCE to 200 CE.'

This matters because it places Revelation within a specific literary tradition that was not Tanakh canon. Documents like 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse of Baruch, and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs belong to this same genre — Jewish texts that used the imagery, language, and framework of the Tanakh prophets to address contemporary crises (usually Roman imperial persecution) through coded apocalyptic symbolism. None of these documents are canonical. Revelation may be the one that was accepted into the NT canon — but its literary method is indistinguishable from the non-canonical apocalyptic texts that surrounded it.

The practical implication the research confirmed: the specific interpretations given to Revelation by any given tradition — dispensationalism's seven-year tribulation, seven raptures, Antichrist figure, mark of the beast, 1000-year millennium — are theological constructions built on apocalyptic imagery that already had multiple possible referents. The 666 'mark of the beast' most likely referred to Nero Caesar in the first century (a well-documented gematria calculation). The 'Whore of Babylon' most likely referred to Rome. The seven-headed beast most likely referenced the seven emperors of Rome. When these historically specific images are ripped from their first-century context and projected onto 21st-century politics, the result is exactly what you described: a thousand different interpretations, each one claiming exclusive access to the text's true meaning.

SECTION IV: ALL MAJOR NT LAST DAYS PASSAGES — CATALOGUED WITH TANAKH EVALUATION

The following is a comprehensive catalogue of the NT's major end-time passages, evaluated against the Tanakh. For each, the assessment is: Tanakh-Confirmed (the content faithfully transmits Tanakh material), Tanakh-Adjacent (the concept exists in the Tanakh but is developed further), or NT-Distinctive (the content is not present in the Tanakh and represents theological development within the NT itself).

NT PASSAGE	CONTENT SUMMARY	TANAKH STATUS
Matthew 24 / Mark 13 / Luke 21 (Olivet Discourse)	Signs of end, abomination of desolation, cosmic disturbances, Son of Man coming on clouds, gathering of elect	CONFIRMED — Draws directly from Daniel 12:1, 9:27; Isaiah 13:10; Joel 2:10; Zechariah 12:10; Daniel 7:13

Matthew 24:36	'No one knows the day or hour' — not angels, not the Son, only the Father	CONFIRMED — Consistent with Tanakh's refusal to give dates for acharit hayamim events
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	The dead will rise first; the living will be 'caught up' to meet the Lord in the air	ADJACENT — Day of the Lord is Tanakh; 'caught up in clouds' (Rapture) has no direct Tanakh parallel
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11	Day of the Lord comes like a thief; children of light vs. darkness; watch and be sober	CONFIRMED — 'Yom Yahweh like a thief' echoes Amos 5:18-20; light/darkness framework is covenant language
2 Thessalonians 2:1-12	Man of lawlessness; apostasy first; he sits in Temple proclaiming himself God; held back by a Restrainer	ADJACENT — Concept from Daniel 11:36-37; Antichrist as singular figure and 'Restrainer' are NT-specific developments
2 Peter 3:3-13	Scoffers in last days; heavens pass away; new heavens and earth	CONFIRMED — New heavens/earth from Isaiah 65:17; day of the Lord language from Tanakh throughout
1 John 2:18	'The Antichrist is coming; many antichrists have already come'	NT-DISTINCTIVE — Antichrist as title not in Tanakh; concept developed from Daniel's arrogant king but is NT theological construction
James 5:1-9	Judgment of the rich who have defrauded workers; the coming of the Lord is near	CONFIRMED — Amos 8:4-6 (oppression of workers), the Day of Yahweh as judgment on the wealthy oppressor
Hebrews 12:25-29	Once more Yahweh will shake heaven and earth; receiving an unshakeable kingdom	CONFIRMED — Haggai 2:6 cited explicitly; shaking of creation in Joel, Ezekiel, Isaiah
Romans 11:25-27	Partial hardening until fullness of the Gentiles comes in; then all Israel will be saved	CONFIRMED — Drawn from Isaiah 59:20-21 and Jeremiah 31:33; the pattern of Gentile ingathering preceding Israel's restoration is Tanakh-grounded

Revelation 1-3	Letters to seven churches; visions of the glorified Son of Man	ADJACENT — Son of Man from Daniel 7:13; 'first and last' from Isaiah 44:6 (applied to Yahweh, here to Yeshua — theological shift)
Revelation 4-5	Throne room vision; the Lamb who was slain; the scroll sealed with seven seals	NT-DISTINCTIVE — Throne vision imagery from Ezekiel 1 and Isaiah 6 (Tanakh-based); the Lamb as cosmic redeemer is NT-specific
Revelation 6-7	Four horsemen; martyrs under the altar; 144,000 sealed; multitude from all nations	CONFIRMED — Horses from Zechariah 1:8, 6:1-8; sword/famine/pestilence from Ezekiel 14:21; sealing from Ezekiel 9
Revelation 8-11	Seven trumpets; destruction of earth, sea, rivers; two witnesses; temple measured	CONFIRMED — Trumpet judgments parallel Exodus plagues; two witnesses echo Elijah/Moses; temple measurement from Ezekiel 40
Revelation 12-13	Woman clothed with the sun; dragon; beast from sea and land; 666 mark	ADJACENT — Woman/child/dragon draws on Isaiah 66:7 and Micah 4:10; beast from Daniel 7; 666 historically referenced Nero Caesar
Revelation 14-16	144,000 with the Lamb; three angels; harvest of earth; seven bowls	CONFIRMED — Harvest imagery from Joel 3:13; bowl/cup of wrath from Jeremiah 25:15-17; song of Moses from Exodus 15
Revelation 17-18	Babylon the Harlot; merchants mourning; her destruction	CONFIRMED — Directly drawn from Isaiah 23 (Tyre), Ezekiel 26-28 (Tyre), Jeremiah 50-51 (Babylon); images applied to Rome
Revelation 19	Marriage supper of the Lamb; Word of God on white horse; defeat of the beast	ADJACENT — Yahweh as warrior from Isaiah 63; banquet imagery from Isaiah 25; but the divine warrior is here identified as Yeshua

Revelation 20	Binding of Satan; thousand-year reign; Gog and Magog; Great White Throne	ADJACENT — Gog and Magog from Ezekiel 38-39; resurrection/judgment from Daniel 12:2; millennium is NT-specific development
Revelation 21-22	New Jerusalem descends from heaven; no temple; river of life; tree of life	DIVERGES — New Jerusalem dimensions from Ezekiel 40-48, but the explicit removal of the Temple (Rev 21:22) contradicts Ezekiel's central vision; river of life from Ezekiel 47:1-12; tree of life from Genesis 2-3

SECTION V: THE STUMBLING BLOCK — WHERE CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM IRRETRIEVABLY DIVERGE

You named the central stumbling block between Christianity and Judaism accurately. It is not the end-time framework. It is not the covenant promises. It is not even the identity of the Messiah as a human figure. It is the divine-humanity and sacrificial atonement theology that the NT constructs — and which the NT itself uses the Tanakh to try to prove.

The Sacrificial Messiah and the Tanakh

The NT's central claim is that Yeshua of Natsaret died as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of humanity, fulfilling and superseding the Levitical sacrificial system. This claim is built primarily on four Tanakh texts: Yeshayahu 53 (the Suffering Servant), Tehillim 22 (the Psalm of the forsaken one), Tehillim 110 (the Priest-King after the order of Melkhizedek), and Zekhariah 12:10 (the pierced one). In each case, the NT interpretation is one possible reading of the text, but not the only reading — and in the case of Yeshayahu 53, not the reading that the Hebrew text most naturally supports.

Yeshayahu 53's Suffering Servant — the eved Yahweh — in context is identified in Yeshayahu 41:8, 44:1-2, 45:4, 48:20, and 49:3 as Ya'akov/Yisra'el itself. The servant is the covenant nation — exiled, suffering, seemingly cut off, yet ultimately vindicated. The Jewish interpretive tradition has consistently read chapter 53 within this context: the servant is collective Yisra'el, not a single individual. The NT reading that the servant is an individual who dies and rises is not impossible from the text — but it requires the reader to depart from the surrounding context of chapters 40-55 where the servant is explicitly named as Yisra'el.

The Levitical sacrificial system of the Torah does not contain the concept of one sacrifice permanently removing all sin for all time. Each sacrifice in the Torah was specific: a sin offering for specific sins, a guilt offering for specific violations, a burnt offering for specific occasions. The Torah never describes a single sacrifice that accomplishes universal, permanent atonement. The NT's sacrificial theology is building on the vocabulary of the Torah while taking it in a theological direction the Torah itself does not go.

The Divine Messiah and the Tanakh

Every Messiah figure in the Tanakh is fully human. Koresh (Cyrus) — the only Gentile given the title *mashiach* — was a Persian king. Davi'd — the paradigmatic *mashiach* — was a man after Yahweh's own heart who sinned, mourned, waged war, and died. The ideal future Davidic king in Yeshayahu, Yirmeyahu, Mikhah, and Yehezkel is consistently described as a righteous human ruler: 'a shoot from the stump of Yishai' (Yeshayahu 11:1), 'a righteous Branch' (Yirmeyahu 23:5). None of the Tanakh's messianic texts describe the Messiah as sharing divine ontology with Yahweh. None describe him as pre-existent, as creator of the universe, or as the one through whom all things were made.

The NT's identification of Yeshua with the Logos who was 'in the beginning with God' and 'was God' (Gospel of John 1:1) is a theological claim without Tanakh precedent. It draws on the concept of Yahweh's Wisdom personified in Mishlei (Proverbs) 8, on Yahweh's Word (*davar*) as creative agent in Beresheet 1, and on Hellenistic philosophical categories (the Logos was a concept in Greek philosophy centuries before the NT). Whether this theology is true is a theological question. Whether it is taught in the Tanakh is not a theological question — it demonstrably is not.

Was This a Deliberate Deception?

You asked whether the NT might have been written to confuse Tanakh believers or create another religion that destroys the concept of the Hebrew Messiah.

The honest answer is: the evidence does not support deliberate deception as the primary explanation, but it does support the emergence of a genuinely new theological system that used the Tanakh's language while moving in a different direction.

The earliest NT writers — Sha'ul (Paul) especially, who wrote before any of the Gospels — were wrestling in real time with the theological meaning of what they believed had happened to Yeshua. Their letters are exploratory, sometimes contradictory, sometimes self-correcting. They do not read like a coordinated conspiracy to destroy Hebrew messianic theology. They read like Jewish people trying to make sense of a shattering experience within the framework they knew

— the Tanakh — while arriving at theological conclusions that went beyond anything the Tanakh had said.

From Hebrew Sect to Greco-Roman Religion — The Documented Historical Trajectory

This is one of the most significant historical claims in this entire evaluation, and it must be established by the covenant standard of two or three witnesses — not asserted without documentation. Three converging lines of scholarly evidence establish what happened:

Witness 1 — Shaye J.D. Cohen, Harvard Divinity School, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2014): 'The separation of Christianity from Judaism was a process, not an event. The essential part of this process was that the church was becoming more and more gentile, and less and less Jewish, but the separation manifested itself in different ways in each local community where Jews and Christians dwelt together.' Cohen identifies the decisive break as the period following 70 CE, when the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple eliminated the center of the Hebrew-observant Jesus movement and left the Gentile communities — already growing — as the dominant force in shaping Christian identity going forward.

Witness 2 — James D.G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism* (SCM Press, 1991; rev. ed. 2006): Dunn — who coined the phrase 'the parting of the ways' — examines four structural pillars of Second Temple Judaism (monotheism, election, Torah, and Temple) and documents how each was progressively reinterpreted by the emerging Christian movement under Gentile influence. Dunn's revised conclusion is that the separation occurred over a much longer period than a single event, and at different paces in different regions — but the direction was consistent. By the fourth century, the movement that began as a Jewish sect had defined itself as a distinct Greco-Roman religion whose relationship to the Tanakh was now theological and supersessionist rather than covenantal and living.

Witness 3 — Adolf von Harnack (documented in the *Canadian Journal of Theology*, Vol. VIII, 1962, 'The Hellenization of Christianity') and confirmed by the Wiley-Blackwell Companion to World Christianity (2016): The Hellenization of Christianity — the integration of Greek philosophical categories into Christian theology — was not incidental but structural. Justin Martyr (d. ca. 165 CE) used the Stoic concept of the Logos to identify Yeshua with the divine rational principle of Greek philosophy. Clement of Alexandria and Origen developed allegorical exegesis that allowed the Hebrew text to be read through a Platonic lens. The Cappadocian Fathers used Aristotelian terms — ousia (essence) and hypostasis (person) — to define the Trinity at Nicaea and Constantinople. The Canadian Journal of Theology study concludes: 'The Hellenization of Christianity began in the time of Marcus Aurelius, in Asia and Africa, and became established chiefly through the work of Justin Martyr and of the teachers in

the catechetical school at Alexandria... The entry into Christianity of elements of Platonic eclecticism and Neo-Platonism was accomplished mainly by means of allegorical exegesis of Scripture and philosophical explanations of the creed. This influence affected the whole range of theology: not only the Trinity and Christology, but ideas of human freedom, the survival of the soul after death, the nature of the Christian mysteries, and the pattern of Christian life.'

What these three scholars — one Jewish historian, one NT scholar, one church history analysis — establish together is this: the movement that Yeshua of Natsaret launched was a Jewish movement, rooted in the Tanakh, operating within Second Temple Judaism. It became a Greco-Roman religion through a historically documented process that included the devastation of the Jerusalem community in 70 CE; the numerical and cultural dominance of Gentile converts; the deliberate engagement of Christian apologists with Greek philosophical vocabulary in order to commend the faith to educated pagans; and the successive councils (Nicaea 325 CE, Constantinople 381 CE) that codified Christian doctrine in Greek philosophical language — *ousia*, *hypostasis*, *homoousios* — with no Hebrew equivalents and no Tanakh precedent.

This trajectory was not inevitable, and it was not a conspiracy. It was the product of historically traceable decisions made by real people in real circumstances. The Hebrew-observant communities — the Nazarenes, the Ebionites, the Yeshua movement rooted in covenant Torah — were progressively marginalized in what scholar Daniel Boyarin (Talmudist, University of California Berkeley) describes as 'a double rejection': dismissed as heresy by the emerging Gentile orthodoxy, and expelled from the synagogue by Rabbinic Judaism hardening its own post-70 CE boundaries. The Hebrew covenant voice was effectively silenced from both directions. What survived on both sides were institutions — Church and Synagogue — that had both moved away from the pre-sectarian Hebrew prophetic covenant that is the shared foundation all three now claim.

Miqdash Bethel names this history not to attack Christianity, but because intellectual honesty before the Tanakh covenant requires it. Every Christian who reads this document deserves to know that what they received as 'the faith once delivered to the saints' passed through this historical process. The Tanakh was not superseded by those events. It predates them all. And the covenant Yahweh made with Yisra'el through Avraham, Moshe, and the prophets was not contingent on any of them.

The Covenant Position: What to Do with the NT

For a covenant reader operating from Miqdash Bethel's position — the Tanakh as sole doctrinal authority — the appropriate relationship to the NT is:

Receive the Tanakh-confirmed material. Where the NT faithfully transmits Tanakh end-time prophecy — the Olivet Discourse's use of Dani'el, Yeshayahu, and Yehezkel; the Day of the Lord language; the ingathering of Israel; the cosmic judgment — receive it as confirmation from within a tradition that, at its Jewish roots, was drawing on the same source. The overlap is real and extensive.

Hold the NT-distinctive material with discernment. Where the NT develops theological positions not present in the Tanakh — the divine Messiah, the Rapture, the Antichrist as singular figure, the permanent universal atonement through one sacrifice — these must be assessed on their own terms. They cannot be validated by appeal to the Tanakh because the Tanakh does not teach them. That does not make them false — it makes them claims that stand or fall on other grounds.

Be especially careful with Revelation. As you correctly observed, Revelation has been interpreted a thousand different ways by a thousand different translators. Its apocalyptic imagery was time-specific to first-century Rome in many of its referents. Its Tanakh content is extensive and genuine. Its theological reinterpretation of that content — removing the Temple, elevating the Lamb to divine status, developing the Antichrist — represents significant departures from the Tanakh framework. Use Revelation's Tanakh material. Hold its theological innovations in suspension. Never build a peace framework — or any covenant framework — on Revelation alone without verifying it against the Hebrew source texts it is drawing from.

The central warning. The most dangerous use of Revelation is by people and movements who use its imagery to justify political violence, to identify their enemies as the Beast or Babylon, or to calculate dates for the end. The Tanakh prophets warned against false prophets. Dani'el was told to seal the book. Malakhi offered an open invitation to teshuvah rather than a calendar for destruction. Any reading of Revelation that produces hatred, date-setting, or certainty about who the enemy is — that reading has departed from the covenant spirit of the texts it claims to interpret.

*Truth does not require the destruction of what is partially true to establish itself.
The derekh olam — the ancient path — was laid before any of these documents existed.*

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