

Basic Systematic Theology

Christian Theology is Theology in Christ.

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Eved Adonai - Is 53:11

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Chapter 1

What is Theology?

1.1 What is Theology?

The English word "Theology" comes from the Greek "theologia" (f.) and was already used by Plato in his "Republic" (379a) in the 4th century B.C. in the sense of "science of things divine".¹ From the Greek it entered Latin and from there into English.

1.2 What is Christian Theology?

In Christian Theology the term "theology" is used both in a wider and in a narrower sense. The latter is "theology proper", the teaching or reasoning about God, especially the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The former is the description of the field of theology where many subjects are discussed which relate to the Bible, man, sin, salvation, the church, the future, life after death, salvation history, church history, practical church work etc.

1. According to Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon. revised and augmented throughout by. Sir Henry Stuart Jones. with the assistance of. Roderick McKenzie., [accessed September 7, 2012] (Oxford: Clarendon Press., 1940), <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/>, entry *θεολογία* , ἡ.

1.3 Different ways to study Theology

There are different ways to study theology or to pursue theological questions. Each way sees things from a different perspective. Different approaches are complementary and help each other to more balanced insights into the whole of the truth.

1.3.1 Biblical Theology

In biblical theology the idea of a progressive self-revelation of God throughout salvation history is important. There is a certain focus on the Old Testament in its various parts as a preparation to God's revelation in Christ in the New Testament. A variety of themes is followed through Old Testament epochs leading to the New Testament counterparts. Examples are the covenants of God, sacrifices, his dwelling places and human mediators of revelation or salvation.

1.3.2 Historical Theology - the place of the historical Creeds and Confessions

Historical theology follows major themes and discussions throughout church history. It is interesting to see that certain subjects were very important in their times. Christology, for example, was of utmost importance in the first five centuries of church history; and it is still important today. It was always crucial, but that was the time when the church thought through lots of questions which nowadays are only repeated. During the period of the Reformation a crucial question was how the sinner can be justified before a holy and righteous God. Historical theology uses the vast treasures of the experiences of the church to answer the crucial questions asked throughout church history giving us today access to two thousand years of wisdom. At the same time of course we hope to avoid the follies of the past. When those above mentioned discussions were going on, certain key terms were used or coined to be more precise in the argument. Creeds were put forward to affirm the truths of the faith and to reject errors of heresies. The creeds often put the essential results of much thought and discussion into

clear statements. They are worth thinking about even today.

1.3.3 **Systematic Theology**

Systematic theology is also called Dogmatics. All biblical, historical and philosophical knowledge is utilized to sum up everything in a theological system. Systematic theology is like a queen within the different fields of theology. The main subjects of systematic theology are theology proper (teaching about God), christology (teaching about Christ), pneumatology (teaching about the Holy Spirit), angelology (teaching about angels), bibliology (teaching about the Holy Scriptures), soteriology (teaching about salvation), anthropology (teaching about man), ecclesiology (teaching about the church) and eschatology (teaching about the last things or end times).

1.3.4 **Practical (or Applied) Theology**

Practical theology adds the practical side of theology to the other fields we have already talked about. Evangelism and missions, homiletics, pastoral theology and administration can all be seen as subfields of practical theology.

1.3.5 **Contextual Theology**

Contextual theology puts an emphasis on the fact that the church has always had to live and witness in a certain time, a certain place and in a certain culture. This is the context in which the church lives out its theology. So necessarily theology has to be contextual. What language is used in the service, what songs are sung, what Bible translation is used? How does the church reach out to those without Christ? How can the truths of the Bible from another time and another culture be presented to the target audience (with their own culture) in such a way that they will understand and by the power of the Holy Spirit accept the truth?

1.4 **The difference between Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology**

After this overview it is profitable to make the difference between systematic theology and biblical theology even clearer. Each have distinct functions. Biblical theology has to unfold the subjects from within the Bible, with the biblical languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, and with every text looked at within its biblical context of Old or New Testaments. But systematic theology differs from that in several aspects.

1.4.1 **Doctrinal dimension**

Systematic theology looks at any given subject from a doctrinal dimension and tries to place this subject within an organized whole, within a system. The whole of the Bible is used for this, but also the whole of church history, especially historical theology. In addition to this it can often be discerned that certain important philosophical presuppositions of any given epoch had an enormous influence on a way the discussion of a subject was unfolding. Certainly in the church, the Bible was always looked upon as decisive within any given discussion, but the way the Bible was perceived was normally influenced by the *Zeitgeist* or spirit of the times. While systematic theology has to start with the Bible, it has also to include these historical and philosophical dimensions in presenting a system of truth.

1.4.2 **Language not found in the Bible**

Another aspect of this difference between systematic and biblical theology is that different languages were used throughout the history of the church in the relevant discussions. In the first five centuries Greek remained very important for christological and trinitarian discussions. Church scholars especially in the eastern part of the Roman Empire often had a firm grip on Greek. But the western part of the Roman Empire used more and more Latin as it became the dominant church and scientific language of western Europe up to the Reformation and beyond. But even during the first five centuries when the discussion was often in Greek, certain words were used

which were not found in the Bible, not even in the Greek New Testament.

The background of those words was more in the scientific language of the times, especially as influenced by Greek philosophy. Or some Latin-writing scholar like Tertullian² could influence further discussions by coining the term "trinity" in Latin (*trinitas*) and by being a prolific and much-read writer.

1.4.3 Contextually determined issues

This leads us directly to contextually determined issues which do not have their origin in the Bible, but in the context of contemporary developments. The christological discussion was going on in the Greek speaking areas of the Roman Empire and in the Latin speaking areas. It was important in Greece and in Egypt, in other parts of North Africa, in Spain, Italy and in France. There were quite a few differences between these areas. Everyone partaking in the discussion brought his own background and context into it.

Somehow it was a question of the times, so important that not only bishops and theologians discussed it, but also normal people in Alexandria on the streets and in the market places. So it was during the Reformation. It was no coincidence that it started with Luther in Germany, but in its ongoing development other players came into it from Switzerland and France, England and the Netherlands. Much of the ongoing discussions can only be understood from the early sixteenth century western European background of the times. They used the Holy Scriptures, of course, but the perspective of the questions they put forward to the Scriptures was determined by their context.

For example, the humanist Renaissance movement with the slogan "Back to the sources!" was crucial to pave the way for Luther's translation of the Holy Scriptures into the German vernacular. Gutenberg's invention of mechanical movable type printing in Germany around 1440 had prepared the way for both movements to spread widely, the back-to-the-sources-movement and the Reformation. Often things happen in history which

2. According to K. Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, edition no. 16 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1981), p 65, Tertullian lived from about 150 or 155 until after 222-3 C.E.

prepare the stage for something new. A new context, a new paradigm is created. People who trust their God can often realize God's hand even in secular developments to prepare the church for the next stage of world missions.

Systematic theologians then have the task to digest the challenges of the new context, internalize the questions of the times and give profound answers to them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit with the Holy Scriptures in hand and heart, having the community of the world wide church in mind.

1.4.4 **Beyond strict 'biblical theology'**

This all shows that biblical theology is greatly needed and systematic theology as well. The church needs gifted systematic theologians who will use the Bible, church history, philosophical knowledge and their analytic and systematic skills to present a truthful and current system of theology to the present church in need of it. This will often go hand in hand with apologetic skills in refuting heresies and affirming attacked truths of God's revelation.

A great example for this will always be the apostle Paul. He had a great love for Christ and the gospel and at the same time the ability to realize when the gospel was being attacked. He was a deep theological thinker with great analysis. Today we can be grateful for many difficulties in various local churches. Often their difficulties became a source of blessings to us. Take for example the church in Colossae. There were some doctrinal problems in the church which resulted in Christ no longer being the center of their attention and trust. We do not know the details because we only have Paul's letter to them. Paul tackles their problems in a way that he writes a magnificent letter presenting a cosmological Christology so powerful that its influence goes down through the centuries and enters every christological debate.

1.4.5 **Unified truth**

Coming to the end of stating the difference between biblical and systematic theology, we can say that systematic theology tries to present a deep core

of interconnected, unified truth concerning God and our relationship with him. It is an ongoing process for the church to affirm this truth in every generation. At the same time the theologians can reach back to get help from almost 2000 years of church history and wisdom.

Every area of systematic theology is somehow interconnected with the other areas. For example the christological debates of the first five centuries were strongly related to soteriology. If we recognize Christ, we believe in him as our Savior. This has also a bearing on the discussions of the Reformation, how God can give me his grace and justify me, the sinner. Without the christological results of the first five centuries the Reformation would be unthinkable. At the same time the view of the Bible, bibliology, was crucial in triggering the Reformation. It was indeed the rediscovery of the Bible and handing it over translated to the common man that was the strength of the Reformation. The basic reason for all this is that truth and reality can not be divided. If something is true in one area of theology it is somehow related to the whole of truth, to unified truth, to the whole of reality. Paul touches this when he speaks about Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3).

1.5 Why study Theology?

We could ask ourselves, "Why should I study theology? What is it good for?"

1.5.1 Knowledge about God leads to knowledge of God.

When we study theology and so gain knowledge about God, the ultimate blessing is that we may start to know him personally. We can enter into a relationship with him. Jesus said (John 17:3):

And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.³

3. If not noted otherwise, the English quotations are from the Good News Publishers, ed., English Standard Version, [Accessed May 9, 2011], 2001, <http://www.crosswire.org/sword/modules/ModInfo.jsp?modName=ESV>.

Knowing God and having eternal life is identical. It is the greatest blessing a human being can receive. God has given us the Holy Scriptures so that we may know him and have true life. And he has given the church teachers over the centuries to help the body of Christ grow, every single member and the whole body (Eph 4:11). So the study of the Bible and theology can lead to enormous spiritual blessings and a changed life.

1.5.2 Knowledge about God leads to appropriate worship of God.

According to Gen 1:26 God has created man in his own divine image. This sets man apart from the rest of the creatures on earth. Having received this honor all of mankind is called to glorify God and worship him (Ps 96; Is 43:21; 1 Pt 2:9). How should man glorify God without true knowledge of him? The ten commandments (Ex 20:2-17; Dt 5:6-21) do not give us permission to make our own images of God, to follow our own ideas about God. Quite the contrary, we need God's grace that he may reveal himself to us through his own perfect image Jesus Christ (Col 1:15). That he may write onto the tablets of our heart so that we can contemplate his glory (2 Cor 3:3-18). Theology well done is an act of worshiping God.

1.5.3 Right doctrine enables us to understand our faith better.

Right doctrine is not only useful when it leads to knowing God better. Every true believer will enjoy it when he understands his faith better. When there are questions and doubts about certain areas of our beliefs, we are troubled. When questions are answered and doubts are supplanted by insight and confidence we are much more satisfied. Studying theology can be a joy, laying firm foundations for the house of our faith.

1.5.4 Right doctrine enables us to safeguard the deposit of the Gospel, especially in the face of influences from the surrounding culture.

When we have started to cherish the gospel as our treasure, then we want to keep it safe. Right doctrine is helpful in this, and helps us to own our

beliefs. Insight into the truth of something taught lets this teaching sink deep into our hearts. The roots of the acknowledged truth grow so deep into our inmost being that the tree of our faith grows strong and bears much fruit. Storms coming from without will shake the tree, but will not break it. It will grow even stronger by the challenge. And we will be able to share the truth helping others around us to grow strong.

1.5.5 **Right doctrine enables us to refute heresy and false teaching.**

In his parable of the sower Jesus says (Mt 13:19):

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

If someone does not understand the preached word of God, it is lost again. The devil, the evil one comes and snatches it away. Only if the word is understood and well-rooted in a heart will it be secure. In the same chapter Jesus mentions another activity of the enemy (Mt 13:24-26.37-39):

24 He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, 25 but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. 26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also...37 He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed is the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels.

Wherever there is revival, the word of God preached and accepted and bringing fruit, there will be a certain amount of activity of the devil sowing bad seed among the good seed. We see this from the start of the church. This also means that the spiritual work begun by God has to be protected against the sometimes similar looking work of a very different origin. Right

doctrine enables us to refute heresy and false teaching. We will not be able to stop the spreading of heresy or false teaching, but we will be able to help the believers to see the difference and to keep to sound teaching, thus safeguarding their spiritual growth.

Chapter 2

Revelation and Inspiration

In this chapter we talk about revelation and inspiration. Revelation is the act of God by which he reveals to man what he wants known and recognized. It is the broader term describing all kinds of revelations of God to mankind. The more specific term of inspiration is used especially for the inspiration of the Bible. It is related to the special revelation of God in the Bible.

2.1 Revelation

2.1.1 General revelation - natural theology

General revelation is the revelation of God given to all mankind through creation. Psalm 19 is famous in combining the idea of general revelation (Ps 19:1-6) with the idea of special revelation (Ps 19:7-11) in one piece of poetry. Let us hear the general revelation part:

- 1 The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
- 2 Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.
- 3 There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.
- 4 Their measuring line goes out through all the earth,

and their words to the end of the world.
In them he has set a tent for the sun,
5 which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.
6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

The heavens declare the glory of God without words to the human eye. To the eyes of those who see, the artistic beauty of creation is a pointer to the greatness of the artist. Of course this Psalm of David was written by a man who was inspired by the Holy Spirit because the prophet Samuel had anointed him (1 Sm 16:13). But here the inspired David points us to creation as a means of God revealing his greatness and glory everywhere to all mankind.

Within the New Testament the classic section about general revelation is written by the apostle Paul in Rom 1:18-21:

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Paul speaks about the aspect of God's general self-revelation through creation in 1:19-20. We have quoted the verses before and after as well to understand our verses within their context. Paul agrees with Ps 19 that God's glory has been revealed through creation. But Paul talks about this

in the context of God's wrath revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and idolatry. God's wrath and judgment is justified because Gentile idolaters (1:23) have no excuse (1:20). They have not really learned their lesson from creation, but their sinful inclination has let them astray. Paul had just explained in a kind of summary that the Gospel of Christ is God's way to justify the sinner by faith and give him eternal life, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (1:16-17). In his first major argument of the letter (1:18-3:20 Paul will show that all of mankind is under sin, Jews and Greeks alike. They deserve the wrath of God and to be condemned. In the second major argument of the letter (3:21-5:21) Paul shows the revelation of God's righteousness in Jesus Christ's death on the cross. The sinner is justified by God's grace and through faith in Jesus Christ (3:21-28). Because of this line of argument Paul's use of the general revelation in Rom 1:19-20 is more negative. He wants to show that all need faith in Jesus Christ's blood (Rom 3:25) to get saved. He only uses the general revelation to prove that the Gentiles are without excuse in God's judgment. Nobody can say that they did not know, even though they did not have the law of Moses or the prophets.

When it comes to natural theology, one of the most important texts is Rom 2:14-16 used in favor of it. Natural theology is a theology based not on some kind of special revelation (holy scriptures) but on arguments more along philosophical lines guided by human reason alone. It can be combined with general revelation because the access of human beings to it is by human reason. Some understand that Rom 2:14-16 speak of some kind of general revelation of God by writing on the tablets of the hearts. They understand this to be God's work in the consciences of Gentile people all over the world. This would be an important idea. But is this what Paul wanted to say in the context? So let us look at this text within its context (2:12-23):

12 For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show

that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. 17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God 18 and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; 19 and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— 21 you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. 24 For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

The context clearly shows that the argument before 2:14-16 and afterwards is more negative, against human nature, against human pride, especially Jewish pride. As Paul proves the guilt of all nations in Rom 1:18-32, he wants to show in 2:1-3:20 that all Jews are guilty as well (see 3:9.19-20). He starts very cleverly in Rom 2:1-11 without mentioning whom he is attacking now. So we read in 2:1:

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.

While reading this, you could think that he is just talking about everybody, Jews and the rest of the nations. But with the ongoing argument, it becomes clear that judging others was especially something the Jews tended to do. Therefore in 2:12-13 Paul already prepares to show the guilt of his fellow-countrymen:

12 For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will

be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

Those who have sinned without the law are the non-Jewish nations. Those who have sinned under the law are the Jews. They will be judged and condemned by the law as Paul is going to prove after 2:14-16 in 2:17-24. Paul's key idea is that the Jews are proud that they have God's own law as a light, but their guilt is that they break it (2:21-24):

21 You then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. 24 For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.

In agreement with this development of thought Paul sums up his own argument of 1:18-3:8 with the statement in 3:9:

What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin.

This then is followed by a long list of Old Testament quotes in 3:10-18 proclaiming that all men are sinners. 3:19-20 completes the argument by stating that the prime target audience of those quotes were the Israelites so that at last the whole world stands condemned before God. If Paul wants to prove this, what then is his use of our text 2:14-16 in this line of argument? St. Augustine sees the importance of the question and handles it very ably:

Now we must see in what sense it is that the apostle says, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts," lest there should seem to be no certain difference in the new testament, in that the Lord promised that He

would write His laws in the hearts of His people, inasmuch as the Gentiles have this done for them naturally. This question therefore has to be sifted, arising as it does as one of no inconsiderable importance. For some one may say, “If God distinguishes the new testament from the old by this circumstance, that in the old He wrote His law on tables, but in the new He wrote them on men’s hearts, by what are the faithful of the new testament discriminated from the Gentiles, which have the work of the law written on their hearts, whereby they do by nature the things of the law, as if, forsooth, they were better than the ancient people, which received the law on tables, and before the new people, which has that conferred on it by the new testament which nature has already bestowed on them?” ... Has the apostle perhaps mentioned those Gentiles as having the law written in their hearts who belong to the new testament?¹

He then goes on in his argument and tries to prove exactly this: Rom 2:14 speaks of Gentile Christians with changed hearts. I agree that Paul uses Gentile Christians in Rom 2:14-16 to put the Jews to shame if they have the law but do not do it while the Gentile Christians by nature do not have the law but do it, because of a new heart and guided by the Holy Spirit. One interesting thing about Rom 2:14 is that the understanding of this verse depends on where you put the comma. Please compare the two versions in English².

Version one:

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.

1. According to Philip Schaff, NPNF1-05. St. Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1886), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf105.html>, p. 228.

2. The Greek reads: ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν, οὗτοι νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες ἑαυτοῖς εἰσιν νόμος•

Version two:

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law by nature, do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.

The difference between the two versions is whether the Gentiles "by nature do what the law requires" (version one)³ or whether the Gentiles "do not have the law by nature" (version two)⁴. How can we decide what Paul meant? The good thing is that Paul uses the same word "nature"⁵ in other texts as well.⁶ Paul's use of "nature" in the following texts is closest to our section: Rom 2:27; 11:21,24 and Gal 2:15. In all these verses Paul compares Jews and Gentiles in the context. In Gal 2:15 one is a Jew "by nature" or as it is translated here "by birth". In Rom 11:21 and 24 Paul talks about a wild olive tree and a cultivated olive tree, but what he really means is the difference between Gentiles and Jews again. The same is true for the close parallel in 2:27 according to its context and use (it is the same chapter as 2:14). Let us look at it within the context (2:25-29):

25 For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. 26 So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 27 Then he who is physically uncircumcised

3. Here φύσει is understood as an adverbial phrase "by nature" explaining what follows in Greek τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν.

4. Here φύσει is understood as an adverbial phrase "by nature" explaining what goes before in Greek τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα.

5. ἡ φύσις

6. Rom 1:26 their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 2:27 he who is physically uncircumcised; 11:21 the natural branches; 11:24 for if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree; 1 Cor 11:14 does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him; Gal 2:15 we ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 4:8 formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods; Eph 2:3 we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.⁷ 28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Verse 25 tells the Jews that their circumcision is only of value if they obey the law. Otherwise they are circumcised in the body, but uncircumcised in heart. Verse 26 shows the alternative that a Gentile who is uncircumcised in the body may live in a way keeping the law so that he will be regarded as spiritually circumcised and saved. Then follows our verse 27 with calling this Gentile person "he who is physically uncircumcised"⁸. This uncircumcised Gentile condemns the circumcised Jew. Why? "For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God." According to the general usage of Paul's language in his letters⁹ "a person with a circumcised heart by the Spirit, not by the letter" is a born again Christian. The same is true for 2:27 and for 2:14-16. The Gentile person without the law in these verses is someone who has the law written on his heart. This again is according to the use of Paul in his letters a sign of being born again (2 Cor 3:3-6 in combination with Jer 31:31-34). I see the parallel statements of Paul in 2:14 and 2:27 as a strong argument in favor of the above version 2: "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law by nature, do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law." Paul does not open a door for natural theology in 2:14-16 according to which people could come to a saving knowledge of God without the gospel, but he shuts the door for those Jews who think that having the law and being circumcised in the body is enough to get saved. On judgment day

7. 27 καὶ κρίνει ἡ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία τὸν νόμον τελοῦσα σὲ τὸν διὰ γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς παραβάτην νόμου.

8. Compare this ἡ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία with ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει in 2:14!

9. See Rom 7:5-6; 2 Cor 3:1-6; Col 2:11; Phil 3:3

(2:16.29) they will realize that their error was immense.

By understanding 2:14-16 within its context in this way the argument of Paul in Rom 1:18-3:20 fits again. He wants to show that all, Jews and Gentiles, are guilty and condemned. There is only one way of salvation, only one way of God's righteousness for sinners, which he then explains in Rom 3:21-5:21.

2.1.2 Special revelation - Scripture

In contrast to general revelation which is for all mankind and perceived through creation special revelation is given to people chosen by God like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and the prophets. Special revelation can happen through an audible voice, a vision, a dream, through personal inspiration by the Holy Spirit, through an angel of God, through the work of the priests and the prophets. The main target audience of God's special revelation in the Holy Scriptures is Israel, including the ancestors of this nation. In addition to these single divine actions of revelation through the generations there is the phenomenon of the growth of the Holy Scriptures. According to the testimony of the Bible God guided people to write books which then were recognized as holy books growing to what we know as the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

2.1.3 Progressive revelation

The growth of the number of the Holy Scriptures until the collection was complete is in itself a progressive revelation of God. But progressive revelation also includes the idea that God had a plan of salvation from the beginning and that he revealed this plan progressively throughout salvation history. Later revelation gives fuller insight in comparison to earlier revelations. The climax is seen with the coming of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

2.1.4 Understanding revelation in other religions

In the Bible there are two different sorts of texts when it comes to the question of revelation in other religions. Some texts are very critical of what is

going on in other religions (for example 1 Cor 10:20; Eph 2:11-12). Some texts seem to suppose that people outside of the line of the chosen families of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob can have a relationship with God the most High, as Melchizedek had (Gen 14:18-20) or can receive special guidance from God (Gen 20:3-8; 41:25). Sometimes in the Old Testament God could use the means the Gentiles employed for divine guidance to let them go the way he wanted them to go (see for example Ez 21:21-23). Proverbs 21:1 speaks of God's guidance of rulers. Rv 17:17 presupposes that God even rules within the hearts of the greatest enemies of God. It will be good to use the Holy Bible as our rule of faith and with this light in our hands and hearts to look into other religions.

2.2 The Bible as the Word of God through Men

2.2.1 The Old Testament witness to the Old Testament Scriptures

Related to the Torah

The main person receiving God's revelation in the Torah or the Pentateuch is the prophet Moses. His calling is reported in Ex 3-4. Moses is said to have written the book of the covenant (Ex 20-23; see 24:4). Much of the content of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers is introduced with sentences like "The Lord said to Moses..." or "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying..." The idea is that God had spoken to Moses and Moses delivered this to Israel. Most chapters of Deuteronomy are a fare-well sermon or instruction of Moses (Dt 1:1) who knew that he was going to die and wanted to prepare Israel for future tasks after his death. Therefore much of Exodus to Deuteronomy presents itself as God's word through Moses to Israel. In Numbers 33:1-2 Moses is said to have written a summary of the way through the desert. We learn from Dt 31:9-13:

9 Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests,
the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the
Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. 10 And Moses com-
manded them, "At the end of every seven years, at the set time

in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, 11 when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12 Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, 13 and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.”

According to Dt 31:24-26 a copy of the law was to be kept by the side of the ark of the covenant. Another copy should be given to the future king (Dt 17:18). The books following the Pentateuch in the Bible presuppose the existence of the law of God as a law given through Moses (Jo 1:8; 8:32-35; 2 Kgs 2:3; 2 Chr 17:9; Ezra 3:2; 7:6.10).

Related to the Prophets

The prophets as a class in Israel were spokesmen of God. They had to preach a teaching in agreement with the covenant of God (Dt 13:1-11). Otherwise they should get the death penalty as false prophets. Their predictions had to be fulfilled (Dt 18:15-22). Otherwise they were proven to be false prophets. All writing prophets point to their own books as the "Word of God" or a "Vision" from God in their introductory verses and in between.¹⁰. There are some instances where we get testimonies about sources of the historical prophetic writings as well: About David (1 Chr 29:29 Samuel, Nathan, Gad); Solomon (2 Chr 9:29 Nathan, Ahijah, Iddo), Rehoboam (2 Chr 12:15 Shemaiah, Iddo); Abijah (2 Chr 13:22 Iddo); Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 20:34 Jehu the son of Hanani); Jehoram (2 Chr 21:12 Elijah); Uzziah (2 Chr 26:22 Isaiah the son of Amoz); Hezekiah (2 Chr 32:32 in the vision of Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel); Manasseh (2 Chr 33:18-19 Chronicles of the Seers).

10. Is 1:1; Jer 1:1-3; Ez 1:1-3; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 1:1; Ob 1:1; Jon 1:1; Mi 1:1; Na 1:1; Heb 1:1; Zep 1:1; Hg 1:1; Zec 1:1; Mal 1:1

There are some instances where we have a witness of fulfillment regarding predictions of some prophets: Joshua 21:43-45 and 23:14 about promises in the Torah; 1 Sm 3:19-21 about Samuel; 1 Kgs 2:27 about 1 Sm 2:27-36; 1 Kgs 16:34 about the curse in Jo 6:26; 2 Kgs 23:16 about 1 Kgs 13:2; 2 Chr 36:21-22 about Jeremiah (Jer 25:11-13; 29:10). In Jer 26:18 people remember Micah 3:12 and say it is not necessary to kill Jeremiah because he said Jerusalem will be destroyed because Micah prophesied the same. The answer of Hezekiah and Judah was not to kill Micah but to pray and ask God for mercy. In addition to the mentioned testimonies of prophecies fulfilled in later generations we see quite often in the stories of the prophets that they had supernatural knowledge from God and that this became evident in their life-time putting a seal on their prophet-hood.

Related to the Writings

Together with the "Torah" and the "Prophets" the Jews have a third part of their canon which they call the "Writings". Some of their writings have also a kind of witness within the Old Testament. The biggest and most important book within this section of the Old Testament canon is the book of the Psalms. Many Psalms have an information about the author or connecting the Psalm with a prophetic figure. The name of David is above many of them who is a known man of God, king and prophet with the Holy Spirit on him (1 Sm 16:13. We learn from 1 Chr 25:1:

David and the chiefs of the service also set apart for the service the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun,¹¹ who prophesied with lyres, with harps, and with cymbals.

David is named as author in the titles of many Psalms.¹² Asaph comes second.¹³ It is not always clear whether it is as author or representing

11. Jeduthun is mentioned in titles, not as author but additionally 39; 62; 77.

12. David in Book 1 (1-41): Ps 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 11; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16; 17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28; 29; 30; 31; 32; 34; 35; 36; 37; 38; 39; 40; 41. Book 2 (42-72): 51; 52; 53; 54; 55; 56; 57; 58; 59; 60; 61; 62; 63; 64; 65; 68; 69; 70; 72:20! Book 3 (73-89): 78; 70; 86. Book 4 (90-106): 101; 103. Book 5 (107-150) 108; 109; 110; 122; 124; 131; 133; 138; 139; 140; 141; 142; 143; 144; 145.

13. Asaph in Ps 50; 73; 74; 75; 76; 77; 78; 79; 80; 81; 82; 83.

the priestly singer group he is head of (see 1 Chr 25:1-8). The sons of Korah¹⁴ are also mentioned and Heman¹⁵ and Ethan¹⁶; also Moses¹⁷ and Solomon¹⁸. Some Psalms have no hint to any author or are not connected with any name. The result of this overview is that most Psalms have a prophetic person mentioned in the title in a way which could be understood that he is the inspired author of the Psalm. This is a way to canonize the whole book.

The situation with Proverbs is similar. There are seven titles in Proverbs dividing the book into seven parts.¹⁹ Most chapters of Proverbs are thus ascribed to Solomon, a man of God-given wisdom (1 Kgs 3:28). The book "Song of Songs" gives its name in 1:1: "The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's". Because Ecclesiastes is according to 1:1 "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem", it has been often identified as another book related to the king Solomon. At the end of the book we are informed:

The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.

If the Shepherd here is identified with God, the idea is that all true wisdom comes from God. The book is a book of wisdom and so claims at the end to come from God. According to Neh 1:1 the title of the book is "The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah". The closure of the book is a personal prayer of Nehemiah: "Remember me, O my God, for good." The book seems to

14. The sons of Korah in Ps 42; 44; 45; 46; 47; 48; 49; 84; 85; 87; 88.

15. Heman in Ps 88.

16. Ethan in Ps 89.

17. Moses in Ps 90

18. Solomon in Ps 72

19. (1. 1:1-9:18 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel. 2. 10:1-22:16 The proverbs of Solomon. 3. 22:17-24:22 Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge. 4. 24:23-34 These also are sayings of the wise. 5. 25:1-29:27 These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied. 6. 30:1-33 The words of Agur son of Jakeh. The oracle. 7. 31:1-31 The words of King Lemuel. An oracle that his mother taught him.

be an account of what God has done through the service of Nehemiah, especially the rebuilding of the defense system of Jerusalem. According to Esther 9:20-21 "Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, obliging them to keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year". The book of Esther is related to the origin of the Purim feast. Esther 9:20-21 does not claim that Mordecai is the author of this book but that he wrote about the same events we have in this book. He is given at least as a source, if not clearly as the author. The main human figure in the book of Daniel is the exiled Jew and prophet of the same name. Dan 7 is presented as written by Daniel in 7:1. Daniel speaks himself in Dan 7-12. In 12:4 he is told:

But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.

So the book itself tells us that Daniel had to write a sealed book so that people later could read it and gain increased knowledge. The books Ruth, Ezra, Job, Lamentations and Chronicles do not give any information about the author.

2.2.2 The New Testament witness to the Old Testament Scriptures

It is written.

In Greek this is γέγραπται.²⁰ The idea of this passive Greek verb form (perfect tense) is that something has been written in the past but with the present ongoing effect that it is now readable as something written. This phrase is used most often in the New Testament for the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament in the sense of a divine passive: The passive form is used so that the name of God should not be mentioned, but He is the understood author of the "Scriptures". In these verses it denotes OT Scriptures: Matthew 2:5;

20. γέγραπται

4:4; 4:6; 4:7; 4:10; 11:10; 21:13; 26:24; 26:31; Mark 1:2; 7:6; 9:12; 9:13; 11:17; 14:21; 14:27; Luke 2:23; 3:4; 4:4; 4:8; 4:10; 7:27; 10:26; 19:46; 24:46; John 8:17; Acts 1:20; 7:42; 13:33; 15:15; 23:5; Romans 1:17; 2:24; 3:4; 3:10; 4:17; 8:36; 9:13; 9:33; 10:15; 11:8; 11:26; 12:19; 14:11; 15:3; 15:9; 15:21; 1 Corinthians 1:19; 1:31; 2:9; 3:19; 4:6; 9:9; 10:7; 14:21; 15:45; 2 Corinthians 8:15; 9:9; Galatians 3:10; 3:13; 4:22; 4:27; 1 Peter 1:16.

There are some places where the "It is written" does not point to Old Testament Scripture: In Hebrews 10:7 it is written (gēgraptai) about Christ in a book we can not further identify. In Rev 13:8 and 17:8 the names are written in the book of life, which belongs to Christ. And in John 20:31 John uses the "it is written" with regard to his own book, that has life-giving qualities through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Scripture or the Scriptures

The Scripture is in Greek "hē graphē"²¹. The Scriptures are in Greek "hai graphai"²². In most cases where the words "the scripture" or "the scriptures" are used in the New Testament, they denote "the Holy Scripture(s)" of the Old Testament, like in these verses: Matthew 21:42; 22:29; 26:54; 26:56; Mark 12:10; 12:24; 14:49; Luke 4:21; 24:27; 24:32; 24:45; John 2:22; 5:39; 7:38 (probably a combination of different passages from the prophet Isaiah); 7:42; 10:35; 13:18; 17:12; 19:24; 19:28; 19:36; 19:37; 20:9; Acts 1:16; 8:32; 8:35; 17:2; 17:11; 18:24; 18:28; Romans 1:2; 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 15:4; 16:26; 1 Corinthians 15:3.4; Galatians 3:8.22; 4:30; 1 Timothy 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16; James 2:8; 2:23; 4:5 (what passage?); 1 Peter 2:6; 2 Peter 1:20; 3:16.

The fulfillment of the Scriptures

There is a special emphasis in the New Testament on the necessary fulfillment of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, normally as being fulfilled in Jesus Christ: See the formula in Matthew 1:22 "... to fulfill what

21. ἡ γραφή

22. αἱ γραφαί

was spoken by the Lord through the prophet"²³ which is also used very similarly in Matt 2:15; 2:17; 2:23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; ; 27:9. These ten formulas in Matthew are special. But there are other references in Matthew and other New Testament books presenting the idea that the Scriptures or the words of God must be fulfilled or are fulfilled: Matthew 5:17; 26:54; 26:56; Mark 14:49; Luke 1:20 (the words of God through the angel Gabriel); 4:21; 22:16 (the Passover will be fulfilled in the kingdom of God); 24:44; John 12:38; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 19:24; 19:36; Acts 1:16; 3:18; 13:27; James 2:23.

There is also a use of "to fulfill" meaning to fulfill what is ordered in the word of God, see for example: Matthew 5:17 includes both, Christ's ethical fulfillment of the Scriptures and fulfilling the prophecies. The ethical fulfillment is meant in Rom 8:4; 13:8; Galatians 5:14; Matt 3:15. Another meaning of fulfilling the word is to teach it fully, totally, meaning all of it or fully in a certain area like in Rom 15:19.

Christ as the fulfillment of the Scriptures and their inner center

can be seen in Luke 24:25-27.44-48; Acts 3:18; 1 Cor 15:3.4 and 2 Cor 1:20.

Qualities of the Scriptures

According to their own testimony the Scriptures are ... Mt 5:17-20 permanent, important, to be fulfilled and obeyed; Rom 1:2 holy; 15:4 giving perseverance and encouragement (homophone and paraklesis); prophetic Rom 16:26, 2 Pt 1:19-21; Heb 4:12 effective, powerful; 2 Tm 3:16 inspired, useful; John 10:35 can not be broken; 1 Peter 1:23-2:2 life-giving and sustaining, eternal; John 17:17 truthful, sanctifying and more ...

23. ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος

2.2.3 The New Testament witness to the New Testament Scriptures

The New Testament also gives witness of the New Testament message as the word of God. Some passages in the Gospels show us that the words of Jesus were seen as the eternal words of God which are being fulfilled and which have to be obeyed (Mt 7:24; 24:35; 28:20; John 2:22; 18:9; 18:32). The life of Christ as written in John's Gospel is the foundation for a life giving faith (John 20:31). The words of Jesus can be seen on one level with Old Testament Holy Scripture (1 Tm 5:18). 2 Peter 3:16 honors the letters of Paul as "Scriptures" on one level with the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament. Paul sees his own preaching as the word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit (1 Thes 2:13; Gal 1:1.11-12; 1 Cor 14:37; 7:10-12.40). Because this is also true for his written letters, he has developed a special way of signing his own letters as a mark of authenticity (2 Thes 3:17). He also urges the churches to read and obey his letters (Col 4:16; 1 Thes 5:27; 2 Thes 3:14).

2.3 The Evangelical View of the Qualities of the Scriptures

The European Reformation in the sixteenth century was a religious movement which can be understood with the background of the Renaissance movement which had the slogan "ad fontes" which means "To the sources!" or "To the fountains!" For the Renaissance this would mean for example to study the classical Greek and Latin authors with regard to science and philosophy. The Reformation movement begun by Martin Luther (1483-1546) in Germany applies the same principle "To the sources!" on Christianity and theology. The slogan of the Reformers became "sola scriptura!" Only through the Scripture man can find the true faith which helps him to be justified before God. Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), the reformer of German speaking Switzerland, and the Frenchman John Calvin (1509-1564) who developed an enormous influence from Geneva in French speaking Switzerland, both would agree with Luther that teaching must flow forth

from the Holy Scriptures. Therefore the Lutheran and Reformed Churches and later developing free protestant evangelical churches have had a traditional emphasis on the importance and authority of the Bible.

2.3.1 **Authority**

The authority of Scripture is the authority of God. What the Scripture says, God says. This is, of course, derived from the biblical testimonies within the Holy Scriptures as we have seen above. The reformers would not acknowledge Christian Tradition as being on the same level as the Holy Scriptures. While Roman Catholic Theologians would often point to decisions of Councils and Church Fathers, the reformers would emphasize that every teaching has to be proven through the Bible. They could also quote Church Fathers, for example Augustine, and they would use them to show that Protestant convictions can also be found in them, but the decisive authority had to be the Bible.

2.3.2 **Necessity**

The idea of the necessity of the Bible is another quality of the Holy Scripture according to classical evangelical theology.

Necessary for salvation

Paul teaches in Rom 10:9-10 that two things are necessary for salvation, the faith of the heart and the confession of this faith by one's mouth:

9 Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

It further becomes clear that the confession that Jesus is Lord is to be understood in the context of crying out in prayer to him as Lord and God (Rom 10:11-13; cf. Joel 2:32). And then Paul points out that this faith is born by the proclamation of the Word of God (Rom 10:17):

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Salvation is only to be found in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12). He is the only way (John 14:6) and the only "mediator between God and men" (1 Tm 2:5-6). Therefore the word of God presenting Christ is necessary that saving faith may be born in the heart of a man and a saving confession be found on his lips.

Necessary for spiritual nourishment

If somebody accepts the truth of the Gospel and Christ as his Savior he is born again out of the seed of God's word (John 1:12; 3:3.5; 1 Pt 1:3.23). But then he needs to be nourished as Peter continues to say (1 Pt 2:1-3):

1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation²⁴ - 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

When Peter says "pure spiritual milk" he seems to think of the Word of God. So the Word of God is the seed through which new spiritual babies are born and the "spiritual milk" through which they are nourished and grow up. The word of Jesus in Mt 4:4 where he quotes Dt 8:3 agrees with this.

Necessary for knowing God's will

The revealed Word of God is also necessary for knowing God's will with certainty (Dt 29:29):

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

24. ὥς ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα ἐπιποθήσατε, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ ἀυξηθῇτε εἰς σωτηρίαν

God's law is necessary to know right from wrong (Rom 7:7). People get transformed by God's word to do what pleases God (2 Tm 3:16-17; Mt 28:20).

2.3.3 **Clarity**

The Word of God is clear enough to be taught to children (Dt 6:6-7; Mt 11:25). It can make simple people wise (Ps 19:7). It transforms people and makes them men and women of God if the Holy Spirit helps them to understand (2 Tim 3:16; 1 Cor 10:11; 2:14).

2.3.4 **Sufficiency**

The Word of God is sufficient for salvation (2 Tm 3:15). People are born again through the word of God (Jas 1:18; 1 Pt 1:23). It is sufficient to produce faith, obedience and patience (Rom 10:17; 15:4; 2 Tm 3:16-17).

Chapter 3

How the Bible came to us

In this chapter we want to deal with the canon of the Bible and the way the different old manuscripts of the Bible have come to us and have been used for our translations.

3.1 Canon

3.1.1 The Canon of the Old Testament

According to the witness of the New Testament the Old Testament writings are understood as one unified and inspired scripture, given to Israel as the word of God in form of three major parts: 1. the law of Moses, 2. the prophets and 3. the writings (Mt 5:17-19; 2 Tm 3:16; 2 Pt 1:21; Lk 24:27,44; John 5:39; 10:35).

The three parts of scripture are also testified by the *Prologue of Jesus ben Sira*¹

2 *Maccabees* 2:13-15 implies that important religious books were collected in a library at the time of Nehemiah and also at the time of the Mac-

1. "Seeing that many and great things have been given to us through the Law and the Prophets and the others that followed them, for which reason it is necessary to commend Israel for education and wisdom", Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, [accessed September 3, 2012], 2009, <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/>.

cabees, 'In the same way Ioudas also collected all the books that had been lost on account of the war that had come upon us, and they are in our possession.'²

Beckwith mentions *Philo* (De vita contemplativa 25) talking about what everyone of the "Therapeutes" would take to his place of devotion, not the common things of life but

(the) Laws, and (the) Oracles given by inspiration through (the) Prophets, and (the) Psalms, and the other books whereby knowledge and piety are increased and completed (νόμους καὶ λόγια θεσπισθέντα διὰ προφητῶν καὶ ὕμνους καὶ τὰ ἄλλα οἷς ἐπιστήμη καὶ εὐσέβεια συναύξονται καὶ τελειοῦνται)³

Josephus (Against Apion 1:7-8) is another witness of the first century to the three parts of the canon:

... and this is justly, or rather necessarily done, because every one is not permitted of his own accord to be a writer, nor is there any disagreement in what is written; they being only prophets that have written the original and earliest accounts of things as they learned them of God himself by inspiration; and others have written what hath happened in their own times, and that in a very distinct manner also. 8. For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only twenty-two books, [8] which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen

2. Pietersma and Wright, A New English Translation of the Septuagint

3. Roger Beckwith, The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 117.

books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time...⁴

Differing from the 22 book canon of Josephus the apocryphal book 4 *Esra* 14:37-46 counts 24 books of a public canon for 'the worthy and the unworthy' to read and seventy apocryphal books for 'the wise among your people'.⁵

Of special importance for the 'official' Jewish view of the canon of the Jewish scriptures is the *Talmud* (Baba Bathra 14b-15a):

Our Rabbis taught: The order of the Prophets is, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve Minor Prophets... The order of the Hagiographa is Ruth, the Book of Psalms, Job, Prophets, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel and the Scroll of Esther, Ezra and Chronicles... Who wrote the Scriptures? - Moses wrote his own book and the portion of Balaam and Job. Joshua wrote the book which bears his name and [the last] eight verses of the Pentateuch. Samuel wrote the book which bears his name and the Book of Judges and Ruth.

David wrote the Book of Psalms, including in it the work of the elders, namely, Adam, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, Heman, Yeduthun, Asaph, and the three sons of Korah. Jeremiah wrote the book which bears his name, the Book of Kings, and Lamentations.

Hezekiah and his colleagues wrote Isaiah, Proverbs, the Song

4. Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Flavius Josephus, Volume IV: Antiquities of the Jews XVIII-XX / Flavius Josephus Against Apion / Concerning Hades / Appendix / Index*, Whiston, William <trans> (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988), p. 158.

5. James H. <ed> Charlesworth, *Apocalyptic literature and testaments*, vol. 1 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1983), 995, p. 554f. But see Jerome below who knows of both Jewish ways to count their same holy books either as 22 or 24.

of Songs and Ecclesiastes. The Men of the Great Assembly wrote Ezekiel, the Twelve Minor Pro-phets, Daniel and the Scroll of Esther. Ezra wrote the book that bears his name and the genealogies of the Book of Chronicles up to his own time... Who then finished it [the Book of Chronicles]? - Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah.⁶

Jerome, the translator of the Latin Bible known as 'Vulgate' makes in his 'Prologue to the book of Kings' the following interesting statement about the canon:

The Hebrews have 22 letters... Again, they have five double letters: Caph, Mem, Nun, Pe, Tsade. For at the beginning and in the middle of words these are written one way, and at the end of words another way. Whence it comes about that five of the books are by most people reckoned as double: Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Jeremiah with Kinoth, that is, his Lamentations. As, then, there are 22 letters of the alphabeth ... so the count of the books is 22. Their first book ... we name Genesis. The second ... is named Exodus. The third ... Leviticus. The fourth ... we call Numbers. The fifth ... is entitled Deuteronomy. These are the five books of Moses, to which properly they give the name Torah, that is, the Law. They make a second category of the Prophets, and begin it with Jesus the son of Nave... Then they add ... the Book of Judges; and in the same book they include Ruth, because the events narrated in it occurred in the days of the Judges... Samuel follows third, which we call the first and second of Kings. Forth comes Kings, which is contained in our third and fourth of Kings ... The fifth is ... Isaiah. The sixth ... Jeremiah. The seventh ... Ezekiel. The eighth, the Book of the Twelve Prophets... The third category contains the Hagiographa. And

6. Quoted according Isidore <ed> Epstein, Baba Bathra translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices, [accessed September 19, 2012], http://www.come-and-hear.com/bababathra/bababathra_0.html.

the first book takes its rise from ... Job. The second from ... David, whom they comprise in a single book of Psalms, divided into five parts. The third is ... Salomon, who has three books: Proverbs... The fourth is Ecclesiastes... The fifth is the Song of Songs ... The sixth is ... Daniel. The seventh ... Words of Days, which we can more expressively call a Chronicle of the whole divine history: among us the book is entitled the first and second of Paraleipomena. The eight ... Esdras, which among the Greek and Latin is itself likewise divided into two books. The ninth ... Esther. And thus altogether there come to be 22 books of the old Law, that is, five of Moses, eight of the Prophets, and nine of the Hagiographa. Although some set down ... Ruth and Kinoth among the Hagiographa, and think that these books ought to be counted (separately) in their computation, and that there are thus 24 books of the old Law; which the Apocalypse of John represents as adoring the Lamb in the number of the 24 elders... This prologue can fitly serve as a Helmed (i.e. equipped with a helmet, against assailants) Introduction to all the biblical books which we have translated from Hebrew into Latin, so that we may know that whatever is not included in these is to be placed among the apocrypha...⁷

Some thoughts about the OT Canon

The canonization of the message of the prophets starts already in the Old Testament (Dt 4:2; 12:32; 18:15-22) and continues throughout the history of revelation (Dan 9:2; Zec 1:1-6).

The starting point for Christians is what Jesus Christ and the New Testament say about the Old Testament canon.

7. Quoted according to Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism*, p. 119 f. This prologue was written about 391-94 C.E. The Semitic names of the biblical books in transcription were left out.

The New Testament presupposes a collection of holy and inspired writings of the Old Testament (Mt 5:17-19; 2 Tm 3:16; 2 Pt 1:21; Lk 24:27.44).

The Holy Scriptures of Jesus and the Holy Scriptures of the Jews were identical (John 5:39; 10:35; compare Rom 3:2).⁸

The tripartite canon of the first century Jews with "law, prophets and writings" is also known to the New Testament (Lk 24:44).⁹

Mt 23:34 and Lk 11:51 probably imply that the "Scripture" of Jesus and the "Scripture" of his listeners started with Genesis and ended with Chronicles (Beckwith and Maier).

Some Jewish statements from the intertestamental period, the time of Jesus and the first centuries make it seem very probable that the canon of the Old Testament was already completed before the Christian era.

Since Jesus Ben Sira we find a tripartite canon with Torah, Prophets and Writings.¹⁰

Since Jesus Ben Sira no new book has been added to the canon according to the testimony of the sources.¹¹

There was no "Palestinian canon" which was different from a supposed "Alexandrian canon".

8. G. <ed> Maier, *Der Kanon der Bibel*, TVG Monographien und Studienbücher (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1990), vi + 199 pp, p. 9.

9. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism*, p. 105-109.

10. Maier, *Der Kanon der Bibel*, p. 13.

11. *ibid.*, p. 13; and Beckwith, compare B. S. Childs in Ingo u.a. <Hrsg.> Baldermann, *Zum Problem des biblischen Kanons*, *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), p. 17f.

The so-called "Synod of Jamnia" which has been seen as the closure of the Old Testament canon since Heinrich Graetz (1871) has never happened in the way this theory presupposes.¹²

The statements in the Talmud about Ezekiel, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs and Esther whether these books "defile the hands" or "must be hidden" or not, do not presuppose that those books have been canonized in Jamnia. Because some of those statements are from after the first century.

The decision of the council of Trent (1545-1563) to include Tobit, Judith, 1st and 2d Maccabees, Jesus ben Sira and certain additions to Daniel within the canon of the Old Testament is understandable when we look at the way certain church fathers have used those books, but this decision does not agree with the Jewish Hebrew canon.

3.1.2 The Canon of the New Testament

Important Witnesses

The Muratorian canon

. . . at which nevertheless he was present, and so he placed [them in his narrative]. (2) The third book of the Gospel is that according to Luke. (3) Luke, the well-known physician, after the ascension of Christ, (4-5) when Paul had taken with him as one zealous for the law, (6) composed it in his own name, according to [the general] belief. Yet he himself had not (7) seen the Lord in the flesh; and therefore, as he was able to ascertain events, (8) so indeed he begins to tell the story from the birth of John. (9) The fourth of the Gospels is that of John,

12. J. P. Lewis, "What do we mean by Jabneh?," *The Journal of Bible and Religion* 32 (1964): 125–132; S. Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (Hamden, 1976); Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism*; Maier, *Der Kanon der Bibel*.

[one] of the disciples. (10) To his fellow disciples and bishops, who had been urging him [to write], (11) he said, 'Fast with me from today to three days, and what (12) will be revealed to each one (13) let us tell it to one another.' In the same night it was revealed (14) to Andrew, [one] of the apostles, (15-16) that John should write down all things in his own name while all of them should review it. And so, though various (17) elements [3a] may be taught in the individual books of the Gospels, (18) nevertheless this makes no difference to the faith (19) of believers, since by the one sovereign Spirit all things (20) have been declared in all [the Gospels]: concerning the (21) nativity, concerning the passion, concerning the resurrection, (22) concerning life with his disciples, (23) and concerning his twofold coming; (24) the first in lowliness when he was despised, which has taken place, (25) the second glorious in royal power, (26) which is still in the future. What (27) marvel is it then, if John so consistently (28) mentions these particular points also in his Epistles, (29) saying about himself, 'What we have seen with our eyes (30) and heard with our ears and our hands (31) have handled, these things we have written to you? (32) For in this way he professes [himself] to be not only an eye-witness and hearer, (33) but also a writer of all the marvelous deeds of the Lord, in their order. (34) Moreover, the acts of all the apostles (35) were written in one book. For 'most excellent Theophilus' Luke compiled (36) the individual events that took place in his presence — (37) as he plainly shows by omitting the martyrdom of Peter (38) as well as the departure of Paul from the city [of Rome] (39) when he journeyed to Spain. As for the Epistles of (40-1) Paul, they themselves make clear to those desiring to understand, which ones [they are], from what place, or for what reason they were sent. (42) First of all, to the Corinthians, prohibiting their heretical schisms; (43) next, to the Galatians, against circumcision; (44-6) then to the Romans he wrote at length, explaining the order (or, plan) of the Scriptures, and

also that Christ is their principle (or, main theme). It is necessary (47) for us to discuss these one by one, since the blessed (48) apostle Paul himself, following the example of his predecessor (49-50) John, writes by name to only seven churches in the following sequence: To the Corinthians (51) first, to the Ephesians second, to the Philippians third, (52) to the Colossians fourth, to the Galatians fifth, (53) to the Thessalonians sixth, to the Romans (54-5) seventh. It is true that he writes once more to the Corinthians and to the Thessalonians for the sake of admonition, (56-7) yet it is clearly recognizable that there is one Church spread throughout the whole extent of the earth. For John also in the (58) Apocalypse, though he writes to seven churches, (59-60) nevertheless speaks to all. [Paul also wrote] out of affection and love one to Philemon, one to Titus, and two to Timothy; and these are held sacred (62-3) in the esteem of the Church catholic for the regulation of ecclesiastical discipline. There is current also [an epistle] to (64) the Laodiceans, [6b] [and] another to the Alexandrians, [both] forged in Paul's (65) name to [further] the heresy of Marcion, and several others (66) which cannot be received into the catholic Church (67)— for it is not fitting that gall be mixed with honey. (68) Moreover, the epistle of Jude and two of the above-mentioned (or, bearing the name of) John are counted (or, used) in the catholic [Church]; and [the book of] Wisdom, (70) written by the friends of Solomon in his honour. (71) We receive only the apocalypses of John and Peter, (72) though some of us are not willing that the latter be read in church. (73) But Hermas wrote the Shepherd (74) very recently, in our times, in the city of Rome, (75) while bishop Pius, his brother, was occupying the [episcopal] chair (76) of the church of the city of Rome. (77) And therefore it ought indeed to be read; but (78) it cannot be read publicly to the people in church either among (79) the Prophets, whose number is complete, or among (80) the Apostles, for it is after [their] time. (81) But we accept nothing whatever of Arsinous or

Valentinus or Miltiades, (82) who also composed (83) a new book of psalms for Marcion, (84-5) together with Basilides, the Asian founder of the Cataphrygians . . .¹³

Origen Eusebius of Caesarea¹⁴ writes about Origen:¹⁵

3. In his first book on Matthew's Gospel, maintaining the Canon of the Church, he testifies that he knows only four Gospels, writing as follows:

4. "Among the four Gospels, which are the only indisputable ones in the Church of God under heaven, I have learned by tradition that the first was written by Matthew, who was once a publican, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, and it was prepared for the converts from Judaism, and published in the Hebrew language.

13. The text is taken from The Muratorian Fragment, [accessed September 22, 2012], <http://www.bible-researcher.com/muratorian.html> where it is given according to Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 305-307. On the website the background of the fragment is explained in the following way: "The Muratorian Fragment is the oldest known list of New Testament books. It was discovered by Ludovico Antonio Muratori in a manuscript in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, and published by him in 1740. It is called a fragment because the beginning of it is missing. Although the manuscript in which it appears was copied during the seventh century, the list itself is dated to about 170 because its author refers to the episcopate of Pius I of Rome (died 157) as recent." This is a Latin translation of a Greek original and often difficult to understand.

14. Philip Schaff, NPNF2-01. Eusebius Pamphilus: *Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1890), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.html>, p. 434-435 (Eusebius, *Church History* VI, 25,3-14).

15. Origen was born around 185-186 C.E. in Alexandria, Egypt. First he was a student and then since 203 teacher at the Catechetical School there. In 231 he was excommunicated by bishop Demetrius of Alexandria. He then founded a Christian school in Caesarea in Israel. He was a very prolific writer. He made a difference between faith (pistis) on the one hand and knowledge or deeper insight (gnōsis) on the other hand. Deeper insight does not deny faith, but is far superior. Origen probably died in 254 C.E. as a result of having been tortured in the Decian persecution. See Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, §17k.

5. The second is by Mark, who composed it according to the instructions of Peter, who in his Catholic epistle acknowledges him as a son, saying, ‘The church that is at Babylon elected together with you, saluteth you, and so doth Marcus, my son.’
6. And the third by Luke, the Gospel commended by Paul, and composed for Gentile converts. Last of all that by John.”
7. In the fifth book of his Expositions of John’s Gospel, he speaks thus concerning the epistles of the apostles: “But he who was ‘made sufficient to be a minister of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit,’ that is, Paul, who ‘fully preached the Gospel from Jerusalem and round about even unto Illyricum,’ did not write to all the churches which he had instructed and to those to which he wrote he sent but few lines.
8. And Peter, on whom the Church of Christ is built, ‘against which the gates of hell shall not prevail,’ has left one acknowledged epistle; perhaps also a second, but this is doubtful.
9. Why need we speak of him who reclined upon the bosom of Jesus, John, who has left us one Gospel, though he confessed that he might write so many that the world could not contain them? And he wrote also the Apocalypse, but was commanded to keep silence and not to write the words of the seven thunders.
10. He has left also an epistle of very few lines; perhaps also a second and third; but not all consider them genuine, and together they do not contain hundred lines.”
11. In addition he makes the following statements in regard to the Epistle to the Hebrews in his Homilies upon it: “That the verbal style of the epistle entitled ‘To the Hebrews,’ is not rude like the language of the apostle, who acknowledged himself ‘rude in speech’ that is, in expression; but that its diction is purer Greek, any one who has the power to discern differences of phraseology will acknowledge.
12. Moreover, that the thoughts of the epistle are admirable,

and not inferior to the acknowledged apostolic writings, any one who carefully examines the apostolic text will admit.’

13. Farther on he adds: “If I gave my opinion, I should say that the thoughts are those of the apostle, but the diction and phraseology are those of some one who remembered the apostolic teachings, and wrote down at his leisure what had been said by his teacher. Therefore if any church holds that this epistle is by Paul, let it be commended for this. For not without reason have the ancients handed it down as Paul’s.

14. But who wrote the epistle, in truth, God knows. The statement of some who have gone before us is that Clement, bishop of the Romans, wrote the epistle, and of others that Luke, the author of the Gospel and the Acts, wrote it.” But let this suffice on these matters.

Eusebius of Caesarea Eusebius¹⁶ writes about the New Testament canon in his Church History:

1. Since we are dealing with this subject it is proper to sum up the writings of the New Testament which have been already mentioned. First then must be put the holy quaternion of the Gospels; following them the Acts of the Apostles.

2. After this must be reckoned the epistles of Paul; next in order the extant former epistle of John, and likewise the epistle of Peter, must be maintained. After them is to be placed, if it really seem proper, the Apocalypse of John, concerning which we shall give the different opinions at the proper time. These then belong among the accepted writings.

3. Among the disputed writings, which are nevertheless recognized by many, are extant the so-called epistle of James and that of Jude, also the second epistle of Peter, and those that are

16. Eusebius was born about 260-265 and died about 339-340. He became bishop of Caesarea in Israel. His Church History (*Historia ekklesiastike*, often quoted as “h.e.”) is of enormous historical value because many quotes from old Christian books (now lost) can be found in it. See Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, §1b + 17m.

called the second and third of John, whether they belong to the evangelist or to another person of the same name.

4. Among the rejected writings must be reckoned also the Acts of Paul, and the so-called Shepherd, and the Apocalypse of Peter, and in addition to these the extant epistle of Barnabas, and the so-called Teachings of the Apostles; and besides, as I said, the Apocalypse of John, if it seem proper, which some, as I said, reject, but which others class with the accepted books.

5. And among these some have placed also the Gospel according to the Hebrews, with which those of the Hebrews that have accepted Christ are especially delighted. And all these may be reckoned among the disputed books.

6. But we have nevertheless felt compelled to give a catalogue of these also, distinguishing those works which according to ecclesiastical tradition are true and genuine and commonly accepted, from those others which, although not canonical but disputed, are yet at the same time known to most ecclesiastical writers - we have felt compelled to give this catalogue in order that we might be able to know both these works and those that are cited by the heretics under the name of the apostles, including, for instance, such books as the Gospels of Peter, of Thomas, of Matthias, or of any others besides them, and the Acts of Andrew and John and the other apostles, which no one belonging to the succession of ecclesiastical writers has deemed worthy of mention in his writings.

7. And further, the character of the style is at variance with apostolic usage, and both the thoughts and the purpose of the things that are related in them are so completely out of accord with true orthodoxy that they clearly show themselves to be the fictions of heretics. Wherefore they are not to be placed even among the rejected writings, but are all of them to be cast aside as absurd and impious.¹⁷

17. Schaff, NPNF2-01. Eusebius Pamphilus: Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine, p. 220-225 (Eusebius, Church History III,25:1-7).

Theodor Zahn's overview of the history of the canon of the New Testament

This overview is based on Zahn's summary¹⁸ of his own extensive work of eight volumes about the canon.

§1 Main concepts (p. 1-14): The word canon (Greek: kanōn)¹⁹ is related to cane (Greek "kanē")²⁰ as in "cane of reed". From kanē as something straight developed the meaning "ruler" or "straightedge" for kanōn (p.2). The Greek word kanōn was then also used for "list, table" (p. 6). The regular use of kanōn for the Bible is evident from the middle of the 4th century C.E. (p. 7) according to Zahn in the sense of "list" (catalog; p. 9).²¹ The Latin speaking church uses then the name "canon" (kanōn) for the Bible in the original sense of "(authoritative) rule of faith" (regula fidei). The terms "old testament"²² and "new testament"²³ implied the idea of a completed collection of documents of revelation. Irenaeus of Lyon does not use "testament"²⁴ for the Bible yet, but this usage of the word is found in Clement of Alexandria,²⁵ Tertullian (testamentum) and Origen. Books belonging to this completed collection were defined as "being in the testament"²⁶ (compare 2 Cor 3:14). A condition for being part of this collection of revelation documents was ecclesiastical use, which means the book had to be read during the services on a regular basis (p. 12). Compare in this

18. Theodor Zahn, *Grundriß der Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1904)

19. Greek: κανών

20. Greek κάνη, Hebrew qaneh קָנֶה; Syriac qanya' ܩܢܝܐ; Assyrian-Babylonian kanû.

21. Greek: katalōgōs κατάλογος

22. παλαιά διαθήκη

23. καινή διαθήκη

24. διαθήκη

25. Clement of Alexandria served around 200 C.E. at the Catechetical School of Alexandria. Before this he traveled in Greece and the Near East. He started as a student of Pantaenus and then became his successor as teacher at the school in Alexandria which he left during the persecution in 202-203 C.E. See Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, §17g + h.

26. Greek: endiathēkōs ἐνδιάθηκος

context the original usage of the word "apocryphal"²⁷ meaning excluded from the public reading in the service without implying any negative judgment of the book. Three supplementary remarks about this condition are necessary: 1. The books permitted to be read during the services were not the same all throughout Christianity. 2. The judgment varied with regard to more than one book up to later times or temporarily in different ecclesiastical provinces. 3. The definition of a regular reading in church services is not absolutely clear cut. But it is correct in spite of these supplementary remarks to speak of an identity of the books which were canonical as the books which were read regularly in the church services.

§2 The New Testament around 170-220 C.E. (p. 14-27): Summary on p. 26-27: Clearly belonging to the collection were the four gospels, 13 letters of Paul, Acts, Revelation, 1 Peter, 1 John (to which 2 and 3 John were regularly attached), probably Jude and the Shepherd of Hermas (not in the time from 200-210 A.D). But the judgment of the following books was varying: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, Apocalypse of Peter, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (Didache), Epistle of Barnabas, 1 and 2 Clement, Acts of Paul and Shepherd of Hermas. The Polemics against Marcion, the Gnostics and the Alogi imply that this collection was not just put together in the times of the discussions but that it had already been present as a result of earlier developments.

§3 The New Testament around 140-170 C.E. (p. 27-35): 1. The Bible of Marcion (p. 28-29). 2. The Bible of the Valentinians (p. 30-32). 3. The Scriptures of the Apostles in Justin Martyr. According to Zahn as is evident from the books used in Justin's writings the Martyr knew the four gospels, Revelation, Romans, 1 Cor, Gal, Eph, (Philippians?), Col, 2 Thes, (Titus, 1 Tm?), Hebrews, 1 Pt, (James?), Acts and Didache among others.

§4 Oldest traces and origin of collections of apostolic writings (p. 35-41): Many questions will never find certain answers. But it may be viewed

27. Greek: ἀπόκρυφος ἀπόκρυφος

as certain that both the fourfold gospel and the corpus of the 13 epistles of Paul originated around the years 80-110 C.E. and were introduced into the ecclesiastical usage of the Gentile Christian churches all the way from Antioch to Rome. These two collections were the foundation of the New Testament. It is equally certain that both these collections were from the start supplemented in the ecclesiastical usage and in the understanding of the churches by another collection of Christian writings. This third collection varied regarding the numbers of the books but was also regarded as profitable to be used for reading in services and for the teaching and edification of the churches (p. 41).

§5 Origen and his school (p. 41-44): No essential change of the canon of the New Testament happened through Origen or throughout the third century. The new contribution Origen brought was an exhaustive comparison of the traditional New Testament collections of different churches (p. 41).

The homologumena²⁸ were books that were universally acknowledged as holy scriptures. Antilegomena²⁹ were such books which were not acknowledged as holy scriptures by a part of the churches.

The Homologumena of the New Testament were, according to Origen, the four gospels, 13 letters of Paul, 1 Pt, 1 John, Acts, Revelation.

The Antilegomena were, according to Origen, Hebrews, 2 Pt, 2 and 3 John, James, Jude, Epistle of Barnabas, Shepherd of Hermas, Didache and the gospel of the Hebrews.

About Hebrews Origen thinks that it is canonical and from Paul. The ideas are from Paul, but Paul let the final writing be done by one of his disciples. Origen quotes 2 Peter as Holy Scripture. He himself has no doubts about the authenticity of 2 and 3 John, but he mentions the doubts of some people as a reason that they belong to the Antilegomena. Origen quotes James frequently, but he takes into account that this epistle is not universally acknowledged. In Latin translations of Origen's books James is also called "scriptura divina" (divine scripture). Only once Origen mentions that

28. ὁμολογούμενα

29. This expression was used later. Greek: ἀντιλεγόμενα

Jude is not universally acknowledged, but he himself quotes Jude as Holy Scripture and praises this epistle very much.

Origen gives the Epistle of Barnabas an equal status with the Catholic Epistles³⁰. Origen views the Shepherd of Hermas as an inspired and very useful book. He assumes that the author is the Hermas of Rom 16:14. But he also takes into account that people oppose this book as not canonical. Origen quotes Didache as holy scripture. This book was viewed as canonical in Alexandria, but by no means everywhere. Origen mentions the gospel of the Hebrews as the gospel of the Jewish Christian churches, but not of the Ebionites.

§7 Lucianus and Eusebius (p. 54-59): The Homologumena according to Eusebius are the four gospels, Acts, 14 letters of Paul, 1 Peter, 1 John, possibly also Revelation.

The Antilegomena which Eusebius wants to be included in the canon are James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John.

The Antilegomena which Eusebius sees as forgeries³¹ and wants to be excluded from the canon are the Acts of Paul, Shepherd of Hermas, Apocalypse of Peter, Epistle of Barnabas, Didache and possibly Revelation.

The New Testament according to Eusebius is with the exception of Revelation the same as our New Testament. We find this New Testament of Eusebius with Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nazianzus, in the supplement of the Canon 59 of Laodicea, in the Ecclesiastical Canons of the Same Holy Apostles³², probably in the Apostolic Constitutions³³ and Amphilochius of Iconium takes it into account together with the canon of Antioch (p. 57).

30. The Catholic or General Epistles of the New Testament are James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1 and 2 and 3 John and Jude

31. *vóθa*

32. See Philip Schaff, ANF07. Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily, and Liturgies, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1886), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07.html>, p. 749.

33. See *ibid.*, p. 573.

§8 Athanasius (p. 59-61): In the 39th Festal Letter of Athanasius (367 C.E.) he is the first who presents the 27 books of our New Testament as the only canonical ones (p. 60). The "kanōnizōmēna"³⁴ are the 27 books of our New Testament. The "apōkrypha"³⁵ are totally rejected writings. The "anaginōskōmena"³⁶ which can be read with profit like the Didache, Shepherd of Hermas, Wisdom of Solomon, Jesus ben Sira, Esther, Judith, Tobias.

§9 The further development of the Greek orient until the time of Justinian (p.61-64).

§10 The approximation of the occident (p. 64-75): Nobody did more for the approximation of the occident to the orient with regard to the Bible than Jerome (p. 65). Athanasius had also a certain influence on the development in the occident. From 340-343 he was in Rome (p. 66). The relationship of Hebrews and some of the Catholic Epistles to the New Testament: Hebrews remained excluded from the Latin New Testament during the first three quarters of the fourth century (p. 67). 2 Peter and 2 and 3 John had an insecure relationship to the Latin New Testament into the fourth century (p. 68). The books of James and Jude were excluded up to 360 in Africa. No African author after Tertullian and before Augustine quoted one of those letters (p. 68). There are only a few traces of the distribution of 2 Peter, James, Jude, 2 and 3 John before 380 C.E. (p. 69). In 382 C.E. the Council of Rome convened under the authority of the bishop of Rome, Damasus. The then 40-year-old presbyter Jerome was very important in the discussions because he became a trusted man and scholarly adviser of Damasus. The decisions were later renewed and extended by Pope Gelasius (492-96) and Pope Hormisdas (514-523; p. 70). Accordingly the New Testament contains the four gospels, 14 letters of Paul (Hebrews last), Revelation, Acts, seven Catholic epistles (1 and 2 Peter, epistle of the apostle James, one letter of the apostle John, 2 letters of the presbyter John, epistle

34. κανονιζόμενα

35. ἀπόκρυφα

36. ἀναγιγνωσκόμενα

of the apostle Judas Zealot). This canon was basically the canon of Athanasius. "Rome had spoken, and the nations of the Occident had heard" (p. 71). It took more time in Africa. The councils in Hippo Regius (393 C.E.) and Carthage (397 C.E.) accepted the canon of the 27 books which had been decided on in Rome (382 C.E.) The idea that James and Jude were apostles was dropped. James and Jude were put last in the list of the Catholic epistles. The idea of two Johns was dropped as well. The decision of 397 was renewed in the council of Carthage in 419. Augustine, who had already been an authority as a presbyter amongst the bishops at the council of Hippo promoted the new canon unremittingly (p. 71).

3.2 The Textual Transmission of the Bible

The area of biblical sciences which deals with the textual transmission of the Bible is called "textual criticism". Textual criticism tries to ascertain the original wording of a text, in this case of the text of the books of the Bible. It is also used outside biblical sciences for example to establish the original text of authors of classical Greek or Latin books.

3.2.1 The Textual Transmission of the Old Testament

This section is based on E. Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments*, edition no. 4 (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1973), 230 pp.

Script and Writing Material

The script of most of the old Hebrew manuscripts and fragments which have come down to us is the square script which had developed out of the post-exilic Aramaic script. Pre-exilic Hebrew was written in the Phoenician alphabet.³⁷

The writing material for books was papyrus and leather. Papyrus was made from the papyrus plant which grew in the Nile Valley. It was in use already in the third millennium B.C. Later papyrus was exported

37. Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments*, p. 3.

from Egypt to the whole of the Mediterranean world.³⁸ Leather was also in use as a writing material from very ancient times, but the invention of parchment out of leather around 200 B.C. brought further advantages. It is more durable than papyrus and writable on both sides. After scrubbing and scouring they can be reused. A reused parchment is called a palimpsest. Since the 9th century C.E. paper was also used in addition to parchment. Paper had been invented in China in the first century C.E. or even earlier.³⁹

The ancient form of a book was a scroll made of papyrus or leather. Most of the books of the Bible were first written on separate scrolls and thus circulated. From the first century C.E. onwards we see codices in use which are more like modern books and had many advantages in comparison with scrolls. Both sides of the writing material (papyrus or parchment) could be used and more written content could be united in one book. This meant that several books or even the whole Bible could be written in one codex. Christians seem to have preferred the codex, and the victory of Christianity in the Roman Empire meant also the victory of the codex over the scroll. In the 4th century C.E. the codex overtook the use of scrolls and became the dominant form of the book also in the Middle Ages.⁴⁰

As writing utensils the Old Testament mentions *heret*⁴¹ (Is 8:1) and *‘et*⁴² (Jer 8:8; 17:1; Ps 45:2; Job 19:24). *heret* is a stylus with which letters could be carved into the writing material. The same writing utensil is probably meant in Jer 17:1 "with a pen of iron, with a point of diamond"⁴³ and in Job 19:24.⁴⁴ But the "pen of the scribes" in Jer 8:8 and the "the pen of a ready scribe" in Ps 45:1 is the pen of the professional scribe writing with ink on leather, papyrus and ostraca.⁴⁵ Ink⁴⁶ is mentioned only once in the Old Testament (Jer 36:18; 605 B.C.) but as some-

38. Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments*, p. 7-8.

39. *ibid.*, p. 8-10.

40. *ibid.*, p. 10-11.

41. *חֶרֶט* This word is also used in Ex 34:2 as a graving tool.

42. *עֵט*

43. *בַּעֲטֵי בַרְזֶל בְּצִפְּרוֹן שָׁמַיר*

44. Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever!

בַּעֲטֵי בַרְזֶל וְעִפְרוֹת

45. An ostrakon is a piece of pottery used for writing purposes like scrap paper today.

46. *דִּי*

thing well known. It could be non-metallic or metallic ink.⁴⁷

The Masoretic Text

The Masoretic text (M) is named after the transmission work (Masorah) of the Masoretes (Jewish transmission experts). In the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*⁴⁸ (BHS) the Masoretic text is given according to the *Codex Leningradensis*, a manuscript which was written in 1008 C.E. We have no Hebrew manuscript of the whole Old Testament which has been written before the 10th century. The oldest dated codex is *Codex Cairensis* from 895 C.E. and contains only the prophetic books. Near Khirbet Qumran at the Dead Sea, some Hebrew manuscripts have been found which partly go back to pre-Christian times: a complete Isaiah scroll, the first two chapters of the prophet Habakkuk and all other books only in fragments. But even more important than the age of a manuscript is the kind of transmission tradition to which it belongs. Some schools of copyists were very conscientious in their endeavor to preserve the original and others not so much.⁴⁹

The most decisive work for the transmission of the Hebrew Old Testament was done in the first millennium after Christ by Jews living in Palestine with their center in Tiberias (Western Masoretes) or in the great Jewish colony in Babylonia (Eastern Masoretes). In the 10th and 11th centuries the Western Masoretes took the lead and their text became the standard text. In the Masoretic tradition the Soferim wrote the consonant text, the Nakdanim the vowel signs and accents and the Masoretes the Masorah marginalis and finalis, that is the tradition at the margin of the page and at the end of the book. But in the case of the *Codex Leningradensis* all three works have been done by one person, Samuel Ben Jacob.⁵⁰

It is a well known fact that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament was for centuries only written with consonants.⁵¹ The vowel signs were added

47. Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments*, p. 11.

48. K. Elliger, W. Rudolph, and et al., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Fifth (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1997), 1574 pp

49. Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments*, pp. 12-14.

50. *ibid.*, p. 14-15.

51. *ibid.*, p. 15-18.

at a time when the consonant text was already fixed. The Masoretic consonant text goes back to about 100 C.E. and has become dominant around 132-135 C.E. There are old text forms known without the Masoretic tradition which are not as conservative as the Masoretic consonant text tradition. While the Masoretic textual tradition resembles a more conservative, exact or "official" text form, these other text forms have partly been called "vulgar" text traditions. They use the "matres lectionis" more often than מ. They assimilate some Hebrew forms to the dominant Aramaic dialect of their own time. They prefer Hiphil forms. They may use imperative forms instead of the absolute infinitive used with an imperative meaning. And they might add words from parallel texts. We know of this plurality of Old Testament text forms through the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Papyrus Nash, the Septuagint and some of the Qumran manuscripts which differ from the Masoretic consonant text tradition. Other manuscripts found near Khirbet Qumran have essentially the same consonant text as the Masoretic tradition. This is proof that the consonant text of the Masoretic tradition can even be traced back to the pre-Christian era.

There are several phenomena in the Masoretic text tradition which agree with their very conservative way of handling the consonant text.⁵² One very important is the phenomenon of "Ketiv and Qere" of which there are more than 1300 instances. Ketiv⁵³ is what is written in the text. Qere⁵⁴ is what is to be read. The consonants of the Qere are written in the margin with a ק sign for Qere and the vowels of the Qere are added around the consonantal letters of the Ketiv. According to the tradition of the Masoretes the consonant text had to be copied exactly according to the original and could not be altered. Even if they favored another reading out of grammatical, aesthetic, dogmatic or other reasons they could not change the text. So they invented the method of Ketiv and Qere to give their alternate readings in the margin. To preserve the consonant text exactly the Soferim counted verses, words, letters of the Torah and other parts of the Bible to make the checking of the copied manuscripts easier. They found the ו in גחון of Lv 11:42 to be the

52. Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments*, p. 19-21.

53. From Aramaic כתיב .

54. From Aramaic קרי .

middle letter of the Torah and the **ד** in Lv 10:16 to be the middle word of the Torah. The Hebrew manuscripts of the Middle Ages are very uniform. This shows how effective the Masoretic tradition was.

Manuscripts

Now we come to manuscripts of the Hebrew Old Testament.⁵⁵ Of greatest importance for the modern history of the Old Testament text are the findings of the Dead Sea Scrolls since 1947 near Khirbet Qumran. In the nomenclature the different manuscripts and fragments found there have a **Q** in their name. If a number is put in front of the Q then the number points to one of the eleven caves where the manuscript was found. Cave one, four and eleven were of special importance according to what was found in them. **Q^a** or 1 Q Is^a is the famous Isaiah scroll with all 66 chapters of the book found in cave 1. It is a vulgar text (see above). It essentially confirms **M** but it has also a great number of variants. **Q^b** or 1 Q Is^b is another Isaiah manuscript which is fragmentary and very close to the Masoretic textual tradition.

Before 1947 the Papyrus Nash was seen as the oldest witness for the Hebrew Bible text. It contains the ten commandments partly following Ex 20:2ff and partly Dt 5:6ff and the Sch^ema from Dt 6:4-5 and is dated in the first or second century C.E. or even before.

Among the Masoretes of Tiberias the Ben-Asher-family stands out. This family has given us two important manuscripts: The Codex Cairensis and the Codex Aleppo. The Codex Cairensis (C) contains the former and latter prophets and was written in C.E. 895 by Moses ben Asher and punctuated. The Aleppo Codex was written in the first half of the tenth century C.E.. Punctuation and Masorah were added by Aaron ben Moses ben Asher.

The Leningrad Codex (L) was written in 1008 C.E. according to the colophon as a copy of manuscripts that had been written by Aaron ben Moses ben Asher. It is used as the main text in BHS while the variants are given in the critical apparatus at the bottom of each page.

55. For the different manuscripts see Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments*, p. 33-49.

The Samaritan Pentateuch () is a version of the Hebrew language Pentateuch written in the Samaritan alphabet. There are about 6000 variants from מ. A high number of these variants is related to orthography, for example plene writing is used more often. It is however noteworthy that in about 1900 cases agrees with the LXX against מ. Some variants also go back to their own version of religion. They have added a commandment to build a temple on Mount Gerizim after Ex 20:17.

Translations out of the Original Tongues

In addition to the above mentioned Hebrew manuscripts there are many translations of the Hebrew Old Testament that have come upon us. **The Greek Septuagint (Σ and LXX)**, was the standard translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek for the early Church.⁵⁶ Many quotations of the Old Testament in the New are according to the LXX. Wherever Paul went into a synagogue in the diaspora he could use the LXX in his argument that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Besides this standard Greek Septuagint translation others were also made in Greek: **Aquila's translation (α')**, **the one of Symmachus (σ')**, and **Theodotion's Revision of the LXX (θ')**. These three translations (Aquila, Symmachus and Thedotion) have also the sign "the three" (οἱ τρεῖς ἐρμηνευταί = οἱ γ' or "the remaining" (οἱ λοιποὶ ἐρμηνευταί = οἱ λ')).

The Aramaic Targumim (ܬ). In the time after the Babylonian exile Aramaic became the spoken language of the Jewish people even in Judah.⁵⁷ For the services it became necessary not only to read the Hebrew scripture texts but also to paraphrase them into Aramaic. This translation was called "targum" in the singular and "targumim" in the plural form.

These Babylonian redactions of the Targumim have become authoritative for Judaism as official Targumim: The Targum Onkelos for the Pentateuch⁵⁸ and the Targum Jonathan for the Prophets.⁵⁹ In BHS the abbrevi-

56. Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments*, p. 51-80.

57. *ibid.*, p. 80-86.

58. Alexander Sperber, *The Pentateuch according to Targum Onkelos*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1992)

59. Alexander Sperber, *The Former Prophets according to Targum Jonathan*, vol. 2

ation for both is **Ⲯ**. Their final text was probably fixed in Babylonia in the fifth century.

The Syriac Church gave the name **Peshitta (Ⲫ)** 'the simple (translation)'⁶⁰ to the translation that was commonly used within the church. The Codex Ambrosianus (**Ⲫ^A**) in Mailand belongs to the West Syrian tradition from the 6th or 7th century and contains the whole of the Old Testament.

The old Latin translation is called **Vetus Latina (Ⲙ)**.⁶¹ Because the Vulgate translation by Jerome later became the standard Latin translation the church lost interest in the old Latin version and its manuscripts.

The Vulgate (Ⲯ). Pope Damasus I (366-384) saw that the church was in need of an official and reliable Latin Bible text.⁶² So he entrusted Jerome (about 345-420)⁶³ with the translation work who seemed well gifted for this task with his knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Jerome translated the Old Testament out of the Hebrew into Latin from 390-405 C.E..

In 1546 on the 8th of April the council of Trent issued a decree that the Vulgate translation was affirmed to be the authoritative text of Scripture within the Roman Catholic Church.

The Coptic Translations (Ⲭ). Coptic is the language of the Egyptians who converted to Christianity and was written in Greek letters. Coptic has several dialects into which the Bible was translated.⁶⁴ The oldest of these is the Upper Egyptian Sahidic (Sa) translation which was done about the middle of the third century C.E. The Akhmimic was then translated out of the Sahidic. Later, perhaps in the fourth century, the Lower Egyptian Bohairic (Bo) was translated out of the Greek independent from the Sahidic.

The Ethiopian Translation (Ⲛ). About the middle of the fourth century the ruler of the kingdom of Aksum in Abyssinia embraced Christianity. Bible translation⁶⁵ out of the Greek and perhaps the Syriac and Hebrew will

(Leiden: Brill, 1992) and Alexander Sperber, *The Latter Prophets according to Targum Jonathan*, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1992)

60. Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments*, p. 86-89.

61. *ibid.*, p. 90-93.

62. *ibid.*, p. 93-98.

63. Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, §33 c.

64. Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments*, p. 98-99.

65. *ibid.*, p. 99-100.

2. Evaluation of the textual variants. The variants have to be evaluated according to both linguistic grammatical reasons and according to content. The preferred interest is in **MT** because this tradition is in Hebrew and not in a translated language. This textual tradition has again and again been proven to be the best. For every deviation from **MT** good reasons must be given. This is mostly true for the consonant text and less for the vowels as is clear from the history of the text given above. It should be seen as a common rule that where ever **MT** is sound according to grammar and content it should be preferred before every other tradition except in single cases where there are special other reasons favoring the other tradition.

In addition to **MT** the translations have also to be evaluated extensively because it is still possible that a translation may have preserved the original text even if **MT** seems sound.

3. Decision. After the collation of the variants and their evaluation the decision has to be made which text can be seen as the original text or the as the closest to the original.

From the above it has become clear that there is a very strong and broad foundation for the quest of the original text. The Old Testament has come to us not only in many Hebrew manuscripts but also in many geographically widespread translations.

And as we have seen above: The preferred interest is in **MT** because this tradition is in Hebrew and not in a translated language. This textual tradition has again and again been proven to be the best.

3.2.2 The Textual Transmission of the New Testament

Ancient book production.

As we have seen above the material used for ancient books⁷⁰ was papyrus and leather, especially parchment (see section 3.2.1). A papyrus scroll would be 9 to 10 m long. If the scroll was written on both sides, it is called an opisthograph. But a scroll was not easy to handle. The sections could not

70. This section is based on Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 3-35.

be found quickly. The codex was much more convenient to find sections fast.

The scribes used cursive script for daily writing needs but uncial script (majuscule script, capital letters) for writing of literature in the third to sixth centuries C.E. Since the 9th century a cursive minuscule script was used which made book production simpler and cheaper. This led to a greater spreading of literature. Uncial manuscripts are older and minuscule manuscripts younger. The ratio of extent minuscule manuscripts to majuscule manuscripts is ten to one. One reason for this seems to be that literature had become cheaper and more people could buy a book, also a Holy Book.

When Christianity became a recognized religion in the Roman Empire in the fourth century, it became possible to have the Holy Scriptures copied in a "scriptorium" done by professional book copyists. One person would read and the others had to write down what they heard without seeing the original manuscript. This could lead to errors of the ears in the copy. Later when monks copied the Holy Scriptures there were less mistakes because the monks took more time for copying.

Lectionaries were manuscripts with a collection of texts chosen to be read in the different services of the ecclesiastical year starting with Easter. Because such official liturgical texts have the tendency to be conservative and even archaic, the lectionaries are viewed as potentially valuable witnesses for a Greek text which might be older than the manuscript of the lectionary.

It is very interesting to look at the statistics of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament in comparison to other ancient books. To classify the different manuscripts it has become customary to follow a system that was started by Wettstein and Gregory.

When the Swiss scholar Johann Jakob Wettstein had his beautiful two volume edition of the Greek New Testament printed in Amsterdam in 1751-52, he used Latin capital letters for the uncial manuscripts and Arabic numbers for the minuscule manuscripts.

Caspar René Gregory from Philadelphia, USA went to Germany after his theological studies in Princeton and became New Testament professor at the University of Leipzig in 1889. Gregory modified Wettstein's sys-

tem by using a Gothic P with a superscript Arabic number for the papyrus manuscripts to distinguish them from the parchment manuscripts (for example P^{46}).

Gregory gave every uncial manuscript an Arabic number with a prefixed zero (for example 01, 02, 03, ... 0100, 0101, 0102, ..., 0249, 0250). Gregory gave the lectionaries a l with an Arabic number (for example l 32). A l without any addition is a lectionary of the Gospels. l^a is a lectionary with texts out of Acts and the epistles. l⁺^a is a lectionary with texts out of the Gospels, Acts, and the epistles. The Greek lectionary has no texts out of Revelation.

In 1963 there were 76 papyri cataloged. According to the list of the Greek manuscripts in Nestle-Aland⁷¹ there were 116 papyri cataloged in 2001. In 1963 there were 250 cataloged uncials. According to the list in Nestle-Aland⁷² there were 303 uncials cataloged in 2001. In 1963 there were 2646 minuscule manuscripts cataloged. According to Nestle-Aland⁷³ there were at least 2829 minuscules cataloged in 2001. In 1963 there were 1997 lectionaries cataloged. According to Nestle-Aland⁷⁴ there were at least 2211 lectionaries cataloged in 2001. Altogether for 1963 there are 4969 Greek manuscripts and for 2001 at least 5459.

Only 50 manuscripts contain the whole New Testament, out of which Codex Sinaiticus is the only uncial manuscript.

As we have said before, it is interesting to contrast these numbers with the number of manuscripts which preserve the text of the ancient classics. For Homer's Iliad there are 457 papyri, 2 uncial manuscripts, and 188 minuscule manuscripts. For the works of Euripides there are 54 papyri and 276 parchment manuscripts, almost all of the later dating from the Byzantine period. Often there is a lapse of a millennium or more between the composition of the ancient classics and the earliest extant copies. In contrast the time between the composition of the books of the New Testament and the earliest extant copies is relatively brief. Several papyri of portions

71. E. Nestle and K. Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 2006), p. 684-690.

72. *ibid.*, p. 690-704.

73. *ibid.*, p. 704-714.

74. *ibid.*, p. 712-713.

of the New Testament are extant which were copied within a century or so after the composition of the original documents.⁷⁵

Important witnesses to the text of the New Testament

The most important witnesses for the New Testament text are Greek manuscripts, old translations, and quotations in the church fathers.⁷⁶

1. Greek manuscripts.

Papyri. Two of the most important collections of Papyri⁷⁷ were acquired in 1930-31 by (now Sir) Chester Beatty (London) and in 1955-56 by Martin Bodmer (Geneva). The first named collection is now in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin (p⁴⁵; p⁴⁶; p⁴⁷).

The other collection of Martin Bodmer is in the Bodmer library in Cologny near Geneva (p⁶⁶; p⁷²; p⁷⁴; p⁷⁵).

p⁵² has only a size of 6 x 9 cm and contains only a few verses out of the fourth gospel (18:31-33.37-38). It is the oldest copy of any part of the New Testament which so far has become known. In 1934 C. H. Roberts recognized its content when he was sorting the unpublished papyri of the John Rylands Library in Manchester. He published it dating it to the first half of the second century. Therefore in spite of its tiny size p⁵² is of utmost importance pointing to an early composition of John's Gospel, because it was found in a provincial town at the river Nile far away from its traditionally assumed place of writing (Ephesus in Asia Minor).

Uncial manuscripts. The following uncials are of special importance.⁷⁸

1. **Ⲁ 01** The Codex Sinaiticus from the fourth century originally contained the whole Bible with four columns on every page having the

75. According to Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 34-35.

76. This section is based on *ibid.*, p. 36-92.

77. For the papyri see *ibid.*, p. 36-42.

78. For the uncials see *ibid.*, p. 42-61 and Nestle and Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 690-704.

format of 38 x 34.3 cm. Parts of the Old Testament were lost, but the whole of the New Testament is still preserved. This is the only uncial manuscript with the whole of the New Testament. Tischendorf found this codex about the middle of the 19th century in the monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai.

2. A 02 The Codex Alexandrinus from the fifth century contains the Old Testament (minus a few mutilations) and most of the New Testament.⁷⁹
3. B 03 One of the most valuable amongst all manuscripts of the Greek Bible is the Codex Vaticanus from the middle of the fourth century. It was already listed in 1475 as part of the Vatican library. B contains the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha without Maccabees. Today there are three missing sections: In the beginning almost 46 chapters of Genesis are missing, then about thirty Psalms and finally the last pages of the New Testament are missing from Heb 9:14 onwards (with 1 and 2 Tm, Tit, Phlm, Rv).
4. C 04 The Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus is a manuscript of the Greek Bible from the fifth century. The former text was washed off its pages in the twelfth century and many of the sheets were rewritten with the text of a Greek translation of 38 ascetic tracts of the Syrian church father Ephraim (fourth century). By using chemicals and working very industriously Tischendorf was able to read the original text of this palimpsest and publish an edition of it in 1843. Only 64 sheets of the Old Testament are preserved but 145 of the New Testament, that is roughly 5/8 of the New Testament.
5. D 05 The Codex Bezae Cantabrigensis from the fifth or sixth century contains most of the four gospels and Acts and a small fragment of 3 Jn. The text is given in Greek on the left page and Latin on the right page. The order of the gospels in D is the so called Western

79. According to *ibid.*, p. 690, the parts of the New Testament which are missing in A are Mt 1:1-25:6; Jn 6:50-8:52; 2 Cor 4:14-12:6.

order: Matthew, John, Luke, Mark (first the two apostles and then the disciples of apostles at the end).

6. D^p 06 The Codex Claromontanus from the sixth century contains only the letters of Paul (including Hebrews). The text is given in Greek on the left page and Latin on the right page as in the Codex Bezae.
7. W 032 The Codex Washingtonianus is one of the more important uncials that have been discovered in the 20th century. It is from the late fourth or early fifth century and contains the four gospels in the so called Western order (Mt, Jn, Lk, Mk).

Important minuscule manuscripts. The following minuscule manuscripts are of special importance.⁸⁰ In some cases scholars have discovered "family-relations" between certain manuscripts which seem to belong to one tradition.

1. **ℳ** or Byz "Majority text, including the Byzantine Koine text, indicates readings supported by the majority of all manuscripts, i.e., always including manuscripts of the Koine type in the narrow sense."⁸¹
2. f¹ The minuscule manuscripts 1, 118, 131, and 209 are counted as family 1.⁸² All these manuscripts come from the 12th to 14th centuries. Textual analysis of the Gospel according to Mark has shown that the text type of these minuscules often agrees with Codex Θ and seems to go back to the text type which was spread in Caesarea in the third and fourth centuries.
3. f¹³ The minuscule manuscripts 13, 69, 124, 174, 230, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983, 1689, 1709 and others are counted as family

80. For the minuscules see Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 61-66 and Nestle and Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 704-714.

81. So *ibid.*, p. 55*.

82. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 61. According to Nestle and Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 713 family 1 consists of 1, 118, 131, 209, 1582 and others.

13.⁸³ All these manuscripts come from the 11th to 15th centuries and go back to an archetype which originated either in Calabria or Sicily.

2. Ancient Versions of the New Testament. The earliest versions⁸⁴ were done by missionaries and church workers to spread the Gospel in Syriac (Peshitta), Latin (Vetus-Latina), Coptic, Gothic⁸⁵, and Armenian. With regard to textual criticism they can be helpful if used with care. Here are some sigla used in Nestle-Aland.⁸⁶

latt	entire Latin tradition	sy	all Syriac versions
lat(t)	entire Latin tradition with few exceptions	sy ^s	Syrus Sinaiticus
lat	Vulgata and a part of Old Latin tradition	sy ^c	Syrus Curetonianus
it	all or majority of Old Latin witnesses	sy ^p	Peshitta
a.b.c.	Individual Old Latin manuscripts	sy ^h	Harklensis
vg	Vulgata	sy ^{hmg}	A marginal reading of the Harklensis
vg ^s	Vulgata Sixtina 1590	sy ^{h**}	Readings of the Harklean text enclosed by critical signs
vg ^{cl}	Vulgata Clementina 1592	sy ^{ph}	Philoxeniana
vg st	Vulgata (Stuttgart) 1994	co	all Coptic versions
vg ^{ww}	Vulgata Wordsworth-White-Sparks	sa	Sahidic
aeth	Ethiopic	ac	Akhmimic
arm	Armenian	ac ²	Subakhmimic
geo	Georgian	mae	Middle Egyptian (= Mesokemic)
slav	Old Church Slavonic	mf	Middle Egyptian Fayyumic
got	Gothic	pbo	Proto-Bohairic
		bo	Bohairic

83. According to *ibid.*, p. 713. See also Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 61.

84. For the ancient versions of the New Testament see *ibid.*, p. 67-86.

85. About 350 C.E. Ulfilas or Wulfila translated the Bible into Gothic after having created the Gothic alphabet for this.

86. Nestle and Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 63*-72*.

3. New Testament quotations in the Church Fathers. According to Metzger the quotations from the New Testament in the writings of the early Church Fathers are very numerous.⁸⁷

Indeed, so extensive are these citations that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament.

Sometimes it is difficult to recognize whether it is a quotation or a more liberal use according to the sense of a section. Here is a list of more important writers of the first centuries whose books contain numerous quotations from the New Testament.⁸⁸

Ambrose of Milan	†397	Hippolytus of Rome	†235
Ambrosiaster	366-384	Irenaeus	†ca. 202
Athanasius	†373	Isidore of Pelusium	†435
Augustine	†430	Jerome	†419/420
Chrysostom	†407	Justin Martyr	†ca. 165
Clement of Alexandria	†ca. 212	Lucifer	†370/371
Cyprian	†258	Marcion	†150/160
Cyrill of Alexandria	†444	Origen	†253/254
Didymus of Alexandria	†ca. 398	Pelagius	4th/5th cent.
Ephraim the Syrian	†373	Primasius	†after 552
Epiphanius of Salamis	†403	Pseudo-Jerome	5th/6th cent.
Eusebius of Caesarea	†339/340	Rufinus of Aquileia	†410
Gregory of Nazianzus	†389/390	Tatian	ca. 170
Gregory of Nyssa	†394	Tertullian	†after 220
Hilary	†367	Theodor of Mopsuestia	†428

3.2.3 Conclusion

We have seen in our overview for the evidence of the transmission of the Old Testament text and the New Testament text that there is a lot. The experts in the area of the Old Testament and of the New Testament have done a tremendous job to get to the original text. In single cases there may be a doubt about a certain variant reading, but all in all the evidence points to

87. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 86.

88. *ibid.*, p. 88-89.

the fact that the scriptures of the Holy Bible have been very well preserved by many means. It has been a lot of work, but this work has been done by our experts and the time was well invested.

Chapter 4

Unity of God and Plurality of Persons

4.1 The Oneness of God

The fact that God is one according to the Bible is found in the Old Testament as well as in the New. It is one of the core truths of the teaching of the Bible.

4.1.1 In the Old Testament

In the Torah

The idea of the oneness of God is part of the covenant of Ex 19-24 and of the covenant in Deuteronomy. It is also related to the teaching that God has created the heavens and the earth and all what is in them (Gn 1:1 and 2:1-3):

Gn 1:1 states that God created the heavens and the earth, 2:1-3 adds the insight that he also created "all the host of them", meaning all the creatures and created things which belong to the heavens and to the earth. This implies the idea that there is nothing which exists, which has not been created by him. He is the creator of everything, therefore the Lord of everything and the God above all. Within Gn 1:1-2:3 time appears as part of creation. It is a created entity. The counting of the days starts with God creating and so having set the beginning. Time is part of the created cosmos, but God

himself is eternal. He was before he set the beginning and he will be forever. Therefore Gn 1:1-2:3 teaches God as the only God and the eternal God related to the fact that he is the creator of everything. And we should keep in mind that this is the beginning of the Torah, the Old Testament and the Christian Bible. It is the foundation for the Jewish-Christian way to look at the world and at everything.

In a similar way Ex 20:2-3 teaches God as the only God related to the fact that he is the liberator of Israel out of the slavery of Egypt:

2 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 You shall have no other gods before me.¹

Within the context of the book of Exodus this does not point to monolatry² but to monotheism.³ The covenant of mount Sinai in Ex 19-24 builds upon Ex 1-18 as the foundation where God liberated Israel from Egypt and brought them to mount Sinai. God had raised Moses and sent him with the power of the divine name to implement the ten plagues to force the super-power Egypt into submission.

The ten plagues convey messages about God and his special relationship with Israel: 'By this you shall know that I am the LORD' (7:17) 'that there is no one like the LORD our God'(8:10) that the Lord in the midst of the earth has Israel as his special people (8:22-23).

In the text announcing the plague of hail we find God revealing himself as unique, having all power over the governments of the earth including Egypt, because he has raised Pharaoh to power so that the Lord's name will become famous to all mankind when God shows his power over Pharaoh (9:14-16). The way the plague of hail is stopped shows that the God of Israel is owner of the earth and Lord over it (9:29).

In the introduction of the eighth plague of the locusts (10:1-2) God reveals his plan that the history of the plagues and the liberation of Egypt

1. לֹא יִהְיֶה-לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל-פָּנַי.

2. Exodus would preach monolatry if Israel was only to worship one God their liberator, but would not exclude the existence of other Gods.

3. Monotheism means belief in the existence of only one God. All other gods do not really exist.

would be a story glorifying God to be told from generation to generation. God's power over heaven became evident in the ninth plague where God switched the lights off (10:21-23).

In the introduction of the last plague God puts an emphasis on Israel as a special nation for himself (11:6-7). The climax of the ten plagues is of course this last plague where we learn what purpose the plagues had (Ex 12:11-13):

11 In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover. 12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.⁴ 13 The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

The fact that God executes "judgments" on all the gods of Egypt shows him to be superior and a judge over those "gods". They will not be able to protect the Egyptians; they stand condemned as useless and powerless. Such ideas were implied in the plagues one to nine as well, but here it is put into words.

In this way the plagues give the summarized message that the Lord, the God of Israel, is the true owner of heaven and earth with no one like him, the ruler over all nations of the earth and the supreme God and judge over all perceived deities in this world which are useless and powerless.

Ex 1-18 as a section leading up to the making of the covenant in Ex 19-24 shows us that Ex 20:2-3 has to be understood as the teaching that there is only one God and no real other god can be besides him, and the sabbath commandment in the ten commandments implies the same teaching (20:8-11)

4. וּבְכָל־אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם אֲנֵשָׂה שְׁפָטִים אֲנִי יְהוָה: .

8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,⁵ and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

The first link of Ex 20:8-11 within the Pentateuch is of course Gn 2:1-3. In the first sentence of the ten commandments the Lord presents himself as God and liberator of Israel from the slavery in Egypt. But he is identical with the creator of the heavens and the earth and the sea and "all that is in them". The Sabbath day is his holy day of rest. The Sabbath day is the most frequent feast of Israel and proclaims God as creator of everything in heaven, on earth and in the sea. There is no room for any other god to be equal to him. Everything is his creation. He is unique and as creator is Lord of all. This is the strictest monotheism thinkable. The ten commandments are the summary and the core of God's covenant with Israel from mount Sinai. And in the heart of it God the creator is one and he is the God of Israel.

We find very similar ideas to what we have seen in Exodus in the book of Deuteronomy. Before repeating the ten commandments Moses draws a line from creation to the liberation of Israel out of Egypt as a proof that the Lord, the God of Israel is one and unique, there is no other (Dt 4:32-39, especially 39):

Know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

Within the ten commandments Dt 5:6-7 repeats Ex 20:2-3. In the next chapter we find a very famous text about God's oneness in 6:4-5:

כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת־יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּם. 5.

- 4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.
 6 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and
 with all your soul and with all your might.

Because the Lord is one, the believers in Israel should love him with all their heart and soul and might. If there were two or more gods, they would have to divide their love and attention to the different gods, never knowing whether some neglected god might punish them. But the good news is that the Lord has proven himself to be unique, without equal, and one. At the same time he has made a covenant with Israel to be their God. What grace! This is the good news they have to teach their children all the time (Dt 6:6-9). They should love God wholeheartedly from generation to generation and avoid idolatry. It is a core truth of the Old Testament and so of the Christian Bible which is repeated to admonish them in later verses of the book (Dt 10:12; 11:28).

In the Prophets and Writings

This teaching of the oneness of God is taken up in the Prophets and the Writings. In his famous Psalm after he had been delivered from all his enemies David praises God (2 Sm 22:32⁷; Ps 18:31⁸):

“For who is God, but the LORD?
 And who is a rock, except our God?

When Solomon blessed the nation of Israel after his prayer at the dedication of the newly built temple he used these words (1 Kgs 8:59-60):

59 Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded
 before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night,
 and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of
 his people Israel, as each day requires, 60 that all the peoples

6. שָׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ | יְהוָה אֶחָד:

7. כִּי מִי־אֵל מִבְּלַעַד יְהוָה וּמִי צֹר מִבְּלַעַד אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

8. כִּי מִי אֱלֹהִים מִבְּלַעַד יְהוָה וּמִי צֹר וּזֹלָתִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other.
9

In Joel 2:27 God promises that Israel will recognize "that I am the LORD your God and there is none else."¹⁰ When Hezekiah receives the blasphemous letter of Sennacherib he prays to God (Is 37:16,20):

16 "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth;¹¹ you have made heaven and earth...
20 So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the LORD."¹²

The other version of Hezekiah's prayer in 2 Kgs 19:15,19 is similar. There is a small difference at the end of 19:19: "... that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone."¹³ Both versions can be understood as stating the same: If there is only one God and the name of this God is "Lord", then to say "you alone are the Lord" and "you are God alone" has the same meaning. The prophet Isaiah has a very strong emphasis on the Lord being the only true God in contrast to the useless idols of the nations (Is 43:10-13; 44:6-9; 45:5-7; 45:14-18; 45:20-22; 46:8-10). Let us hear the section where this is combined with an invitation for all nations to be saved (45:20-22):

20 Assemble yourselves and come;
draw near together,
you survivors of the nations!
They have no knowledge
who carry about their wooden idols,
and keep on praying to a god that cannot save.

9. לַמַּעַן דַּעַת כָּל־עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים אִין עוֹד:
10. וְאֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְאִין עוֹד
11. אַתְּ־הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים לְבַדָּךְ לְכָל מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ
12. וַיִּדְעוּ כָל־מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ כִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה לְבַדָּךְ:
13. כִּי אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לְבַדָּךְ:

21 Declare and present your case;
 let them take counsel together!
 Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old?
 Was it not I, the LORD?
 And there is no other god besides me,¹⁴
 a righteous God and a Savior;
 there is none besides me.¹⁵
 22 Turn to me and be saved,
 all the ends of the earth!
 For I am God, and there is no other.¹⁶

In the next verses we have God's solemn oath that all knees will bow to him and all tongues will confess him as the source of righteousness and strength (Is 45:23-25).

In Jer 10:1-16 we have an emphasis which is very like these sections of Isaiah. It is interesting that within this Hebrew section we have one verse in Aramaic which was the most common language in the middle east of that time (Jer 10:11):

Thus shall you say to them: “The gods who did not make
 the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from
 under the heavens.”

The result of course would be that only the one and true God is left who has created the heavens and the earth. He is proclaimed as king and creator in the verses before and after this Aramaic proclamation to the world (Jer 10:10,12-13).

The day of the Lord at the end of time is the subject of Zec 14. The great result of God's coming and battle on that day is Zec 14:9:

And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day
 the LORD will be one and his name one.¹⁷

14. ואין עוד אלהים מבלעדי

15. אין זולתי:

16. כי אני אל ואין עוד:

17. והיה יהוה למלך על-כל-הארץ ביום ההוא יהיה יהוה אחד ושמו אחד:

4.1.2 In the New Testament

The belief that there is only one God is also a core truth in the New Testament. When Jesus was asked about the most important commandment of God, he answered in Mk 12:29-30:

The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.'¹⁸ 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'¹⁹ 31 The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.

When the scribe who had asked Jesus the question agreed and confirmed the answer of Jesus in an understanding way (12:32-33), Jesus told him that he was not far from the kingdom of God (12:34). This underlines the importance of this truth that God is one, combined with loving him from our whole hearts. A person who has this truth is not far from God's kingdom.

When Jesus was tempted by the devil to worship him, he answered (Mt 4:10):

Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."²⁰

The quote is probably from Dt 6:13 and the "only" is supplied according to the meaning from the context in Dt 6:4-5. Dt 6 teaches, of course, that there is only one God. So if you have to worship him, you can not divide your heart to worship someone else as well. The parallel in Lk 4:8 has the same teaching. So far we have seen that all synoptic gospels incorporate the Old Testament teaching of the oneness of God. The same is true for John (5:44):

18. Ἀκουε, Ἰσραήλ, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστίν

19. The parallel texts in Mt 22:37 and Lk 10:27 speak of the commandment to love God with all your heart etc., but they do not introduce it with the oneness of God like Mark does. All three texts of course go back to Dt 6:4-5.

20. Κύριον τὸν θεόν σου προσκυνήσεις καὶ αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύσεις. This quoted Greek text from Mt 4:10 is the same in Lk 4:8.

How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?²¹

This statement of Jesus implies that to believe in the one and only God also means to seek glory from God and not from other human beings. Any person who is honor-oriented towards men, can not trust God the way he should. This shows that the faith in the one and only God is crucial for the saving and live-giving faith as stated in the Gospel of John. John 17:3 points in this same direction:

And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.²²

To have real faith according to John 5:44 means to trust the one and only God and seek honor from him. According to John 17:3 to have real and eternal life means to know this same one and only God and to know Jesus Christ. When we reflect on the purpose of the book of John which is to generate life-giving faith (John 20:31), we understand how crucial the faith in the one and only God is for the whole book. When the Jews in their discussion with Jesus claimed, "We have one Father - even God" (John 8:41), they, of course, presupposed the oneness of God as well.

Paul points frequently in his letters to the oneness of God (Rom 3:30; 1 Cor 8:4.6; Gal 3:20; Eph 4:6; 1 Tm 1:17; 1 Tm 2:5). His use of God's oneness is very interesting. In Rom 3:29-30 God is the Savior of the Jews and the Gentiles alike through faith in Christ because there is only one God. In 1 Cor 8:4-6 Paul introduces the oneness of God into the discussion of the food offered to idols:

4 Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one."²³ 5 For although there may be so-called gods

21. πῶς δύνασθε ὑμεῖς πιστεῦσαι, δόξαν παρ ἀλλήλων λαμβάνοντες, καὶ τὴν δόξαν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ μόνου θεοῦ οὐ ζητεῖτε;

22. αὕτη δέ ἐστιν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωὴ ἵνα γινώσκωσι σὲ τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν καὶ ὃν ἀπέστειλας Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.

23. καὶ ὅτι οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἰς.

in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.²⁴

The idea here is that idols have no existence of their own, because there is only one real God who has created everything. In Gal 3:19-20 Paul speaks of the law which had been given through a plurality of angels and one mediator (Moses) and because of sins until the offspring should come to whom the special promise had been made (Christ). Paul states (3:19 according to ESV; 3:20, translation Lanz):

19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. 20 But the mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.²⁵

I understand the mediator to be Moses. The cryptic phrase that Moses was not a "mediator of one" I take in the context of Paul's statement that the law "was put in place through angels by an intermediary". Of course, God was the giver of the covenant and the law, but he used angels to put the law into place and that through the mediator Moses. And because Moses received much of God's word through a plurality of angels, in spite of the fact that it was the word of the one and only God, still Moses had to deal with more than one person and was mediator not of only one, but God is one. In contrast to this, when Christ, the offspring of Abraham came "to whom the promise had been made", it became clear that he was God incarnate and his being mediator was of quite another quality (1 Tm 2:3-6):

24. ἀλλ ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατήρ, ἐκ οὗ τὰ ἴνα καὶ ὑμεῖς εἰ αὐτῷ, καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, διὰ οὗ τὰ ἴνα καὶ ὑμεῖς διὰ αὐτοῦ.

25. 19 Τὰ οὐ ὁ νόμος; τῆς παραβάτην Κύριον προσετέθη, ἄχρις οὗ ἔθνη τὸ σπέρμα πῶς ἐπιγγέλται, διαταγὴς διὰ ἀλλήλων ἐκ χειρὶ μεσίτου• 20 ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἑνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν, ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἷς ἐστίν.

3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,²⁶ 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

In both texts Paul uses the same word "mediator" for Moses in Gal 3:19-20 and for Christ in 1 Tm 2:5, but the big difference is that now the time of the promised offspring had come and the New Covenant is there which is superior to the Old Covenant. Salvation history had progressed, Christ the God-man had come, given himself up as the true and eternally valid sacrifice and laid the foundation for the potential salvation of all mankind. Christ in his person as man and God is the perfect mediator without any angels in between. In the same letter Paul sums up the Gospel and then gives praise to the one and only God who gave it to us (1 Tm 1:15-17):

15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. 17 To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.²⁷

Paul admonishes the Ephesians "to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3) and then points to the good reasons why all Christians should be one (Eph 4:4-6):

4 There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call - 5 one Lord, one faith,

26. εἷς γὰρ θεός, εἷς καὶ μεσίτου θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων ἄνθρωπος Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν

27. τῆς δὲ βασιλείᾳ τῆς αἰώνιος, ἀφθάρτῳ, ἀφθάρτῳ, μόνῳ θεοῦ, μὴ καὶ δόξαν εἰ τοῦ αἰώνιος τῆς αἰώνιος• ἀμήν.

one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.²⁸

This text presents the oneness of God as one of the core Christian beliefs which are essential to the unity of the world wide church.

James refers to the oneness of God as a core belief (2:19) in the context of his emphasis that true faith must have an impact on one's life visible in works of faith (2:18-21). Jude concludes his short epistle with a praise of the only God and our Savior (Jude 1:24-25).

The oneness of God is sometimes also touched indirectly in the New Testament when God is presented as the one and only who can do something or has a certain quality no one else has. He alone can forgive sins (Mk 2:7). He alone is good in an absolute sense (Mk 10:18; Lk 18:19). He alone is worthy to be served in an absolute way. When somebody wants to serve God he must serve him only and can not serve another master in addition to God, for example he can not serve his own wealth and money in addition to serving God (Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13). In Rom 16:27 God alone is wise in an absolute sense as glory is given "to the only wise God".²⁹

4.2 The Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the core beliefs of the Bible and of mainstream historical Christianity. During the first five centuries of church history the greatest minds of the Christian Church have struggled to understand and present to the church the teachings of the Old and New Testament about God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. At the heart of this struggle lies the greatest miracle of all times, the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. On the one hand this has grown historically to a very sophisticated doctrine of the Holy Trinity, on the other hand the core elements of this

28. εἷς θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ πάντων, ὁ ἐκ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐκ ποιῶσιν.

29. μόνῳ σοφῷ θεοῦ διὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν πῶς ἡ δόξαν εἰ τοῦ αἰώνιος· ἀμήν. The Greek here is given according to K. Aland and B. Metzger, *The Greek New Testament*, UBS, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1975).

creed can be presented in very simple sentences. As Wayne Grudem has put it so ably:

Three Statements Summarize the Biblical Teaching ...

1. God is three persons.
2. Each person is fully God.
3. There is one God.³⁰

While we enter into the discussion of this important subject we will start with the Old Testament, progress to the New and then have a look at the historical development in the early church after that.

4.2.1 In the Old Testament

Within the course of progressive revelation history the clearest and most important texts in support of this doctrine are found within the pages of the New Testament. But as is the case with many of the different subjects of revelation history certain texts and statements within the Old Testament can be found that are like seeds preparing the way for the growth of later revelation history.

Hints towards a plurality of persons

In certain texts within the Old Testament there seem to be hints towards a plurality of persons within the Godhead. We learn about the creation of man in Gn 1:26-27:

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

30. Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 2005), p. 231.

In Gn 1:26 God speaks in the first person plural ("Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.") about the creation of man in the image of God. In Gn 1:27 when man is actually created the third person singular is used to tell the reader that man was created in God's image. How is this plural to be understood? In the Hebrew Grammar of Gesenius and Kautzsch we find this interesting explanation:³¹

The Jewish grammarians call such plurals רבוי הכחות *plur. virium* or *virtutum*; later grammarians call them *plur. excellentiae, magnitudinis, or plur. maiestaticus*. This last name may have been suggested by the *we* used by kings when speaking of themselves (cf. already 1 Macc. 10¹⁹, 11³¹); and the plural used by God in Gn 1²⁶, 11⁷, Is 6⁸ has been incorrectly explained in this way. It is, however, either *communicative* (including the attendant angels; so at all events in Is 6⁸, cf. also Gn 3²²), or according to others, an indication of *the fullness of power and might* implied in אֱלֹהִים (see Dillmann on Gn 1²⁶); but it is best explained as a plural of *self-deliberation*. The use of the plural as a form of respectful address is quite foreign to Hebrew.

It is remarkable that here the plural of majesty is rejected. I do not think that it can be communicative in Gn 1:26. It cannot include the angels in the *we* because nowhere in the Bible men are said to have been created in the image of the angels. The special honor of man is that he has been created in the image of God. And if it clearly cannot be communicative in Gn 1:26, then some other sense must be understood and the same understanding might be the right one for Gn 3:22 and 11:7 which belong to the same wider context of Gn 1-11. It could be communicative in Is 6, but if some other and better understanding is found for the instances in Gn 1-11, then the same could be applied in Is 6:8. The favored understanding of the above quoted famous grammar book is the plural of self-deliberation. Let us see whether this fits Gn 3:22-23:

31. W. Gesenius, Kautzsch E., and A. E. Cowley, *Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1976), §124 g, note 2.

Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil."³² Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" 23 therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.

The phrase "like one of us" puts the speaker in a group of plurality and exceeds the limits of a plural of self-deliberation. This plural used by God himself speaking is the first such plural after Gn 1:26. This puts both speeches of God into a closed context. In Gn 1:26 it was not really possible to include the angels as those talked to. Here, I think, the wording "like one of us" is against a plural of self-deliberation. The result is that from the start of the Bible there are certain "hints", not more than that, but still hints towards a plurality within the Godhead.³³ If that is accepted Gn 11:7 can be understood in a similar way because all three examples are found in the same context of the primeval history of Gn 1-11:

Come, let us go down and there confuse their language,³⁴
so that they may not understand one another's speech.

With regard to Is 6:8, it is noteworthy that this would not be the only hint within the book of Isaiah towards a plurality in the Godhead:

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"³⁵ Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

32. הֵן הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאַחַד מֵאֵנוּ לְדַעַת טוֹב וָרָע.

33. So with Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 227. On the same page Grudem states in footnote 2 about the Jewish understanding of Gn 1:26: "My own extensive search of subsequent Jewish interpretation in the Babylonian Talmud, the targumim and the midrashim showed only that later Rabbinic interpreters were unable to reach agreement on any satisfactory interpretation of this passage, although the 'plural of majesty' and 'God speaking to angels' interpretations were commonly suggested."

34. הִבֵּה נִרְדָּה וְנִבְלָה שֵׁם שַׁמַּיִם.

35. אֲתִמְּךָ אֶשְׁלַח וְכִי יֵלְךָ-לָנוּ.

The case of Is 6:8 within its context resembles the situation in Gn 1-11. Is 6:8 is part of the chapter which begins the narrative block of Is 6-8 with the sequence of prophecies in Is 9-12. Within this context you have a series of oracles³⁶ which can be understood as Messianic, pointing even to a divine Messiah in Isaiah (see subsection 9.1.3).

If it is correct that the Messiah who is called "Mighty God" in Is 9:6 is identified with the "mighty God" to which the Israelites will turn in repentance in Is 10:21, then we have a divine Messiah in Isaiah. If we have a divine Messiah prophesied in Isaiah 9-10, then we can use this information to understand the plural in Is 6:8.

"The Angel of the Lord" can sometimes point to a revelation of the divinity. But this is not always the case because even human beings can be called literally the "angel of the Lord" with the same Hebrew words which are usually translated as "the angel of the Lord": The Levitic priests are called "the messenger of the Lord of hosts" in Mal 2:7.³⁷ Haggai is also called "the messenger of the Lord" in Haggai 1:13.³⁸ But there are certain sections where the context shows that the meeting with "the angel of the Lord" is understood as an encounter with the living God (Gn 16:13; Ex 3:2-6; Nm 22:35-38; Jgs 6:11-14. In Ex 23:20-22 the "name" of God is in the angel of the Lord.

There is another text in the Old Testament which is quite important for the development of trinitarian teaching and this is Proverbs 8:22-25, especially the personification of wisdom in this passage.

22 The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, the
first of his acts of old.³⁹
23 Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

36. Is 7:14; 8:8-10; 9:6-7; 10:20-21; 11:1-10. See also in the same book: 42:1-12; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12; 55:3-4; 61:1-3.

37. כִּי מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה יֵצֵאֹת הוּא:

38. מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה

39. יְהוָה קִנְּנִי רִאשִׁית דְּרָכָיו קִדְּם מִפְּעִלִי מֵאֶז:

24 When there were no depths I was brought forth,
 when there were no springs abounding with water.
 25 Before the mountains had been shaped,
 before the hills, I was brought forth.

The verb in the idiom "The Lord possessed me" is used in Gn 4:1 of the joy of Eve who gave birth to Cain and said: "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord."⁴⁰ So it is possible to understand it in the context of a parent getting a son. The similarity of the personification of wisdom in Prv 8:22-31 with certain aspects of the characteristics of the Lögös, the Word, in John 1:1-18 has led to an early combination of the two texts in trinitarian and christological discussions in church history. It is clear in Proverbs 8 that God must have had his wisdom first, before he created the world and all of the things of the world, because he did it all wonderfully and with great skill. The same is true for the Lögös in John 1:1-18 which is identified with the Son of God, Jesus Christ. In the beginning God created everything through the power of his Word as Genesis 1 shows us.

God as Father

Within the Old Testament God has revealed himself as Father right from the beginning. In order to free Israel from the slavery in Egypt Moses had to tell Pharaoh (Ex 4:22-23):

22 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord,
 Israel is my firstborn son, 23 and I say to you, "Let my son go
 that he may serve me." If you refuse to let him go, behold, I
 will kill your firstborn son.'

The idea that God is the Father of Israel is then repeated throughout the Old Testament (e.g. Dt 14:1; Ps 73:15; Is 64:8; Mal 1:6). The Old Testament teaching about God as Father of Israel "from of old" is reflected very well in Is 63:16.

40. קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת־יְהוָה.

The Messiah as Son of God

God's covenant with David (2 Sm 23:1.5; 7:11-16) implied that God would also be the Father of the Son of David who would be the "anointed" (= Hebrew: Messiah, Greek: Christos) king on the throne (2 Sm 7:14-15):

14 I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.
When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod
of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, 15 but my steadfast
love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom
I put away from before you. 16 And your house and your
kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne
shall be established forever.

The Son of David and king in Jerusalem would be an adopted Son of God. This covenant of God is based on grace and even overcoming the possible future sins of the Sons of David from generation to generation. This is the reason that David's throne shall be established forever.

When later prophets pointed back to these promises of God to David, they prophesied, guided by the Holy Spirit, a future coming Son of David who would bring salvation and forgiveness of sins to Judah and Israel (Jer 23:5-6; Zec 3:8-9; 9:9-11; 12:10-13:1; Is 42:1-7; 53:4-6; 55:1-5). This future Son of David would be himself without sin (Is 53:9), building his kingdom on total and perfect righteousness and thus ruling the whole world forever in peace (Is 9:6-7; 11:3-10).

Within the wisdom literature of the Old Testament Proverbs 30:4 points also to the mystery of the identity of the "Son of God". For further discussion of the Messiah or Christ as God see the subject of Christology (chapter 9).

The Holy Spirit as God

When God accuses Israel of sinning because they carry out plans without God and make alliances, "but not of my Spirit" (Is 30:1), it is clear that the phrases "without God" and "not of my Spirit" are placed in a synonymous parallelism: The Spirit of God is divine, is God himself. The same is true when God says in Is 31:3:

"The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit.

Again "God" and "Spirit" are put in a synonymous parallelism and identified. The Spirit of God is God. For further discussion of the Holy Spirit as God see the subject of Pneumatology (chapter 13).

4.2.2 In the New Testament

God is three persons.

Trinitarian statements can be found in different places in the New Testament. The three persons of the Trinity can be seen in Mt 3:16-17:

16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

The descent of the Spirit of God on Jesus shows him to be the Messiah (cf. John 1:32-33). Here Jesus is anointed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38). The voice of God the Father from heaven also affirms Jesus as the Messiah from Ps 2:7 and the servant of the Lord from Is 42:1. All persons of the Trinity are involved and every person appears separately. At the end of the same Gospel of Matthew Jesus points to the Trinity in the great commission (Mt 28:18-20):

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,⁴¹ 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

41. πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος

The resurrected Jesus Christ himself appears here as the Lord of all in heaven and earth. The disciples fall down before him (28:17). The gospel of Christ has to be proclaimed to all nations. Everyone who becomes a disciple of Jesus by accepting his teaching has to be baptized in the name of the triune God.

The apostle Paul uses trinitarian language more than once (1 Cor 12:4-6; Eph 4:4-6; 2 Thes 2:13-14). His conclusion of 2 Corinthians (13:14) has become especially famous:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and
the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.⁴²

Peter starts his first letter with the three persons of the Trinity (1:1-2). And Jude urges the believers to persevere in their faith by pointing them to the Trinity as well (1:20-21).

Each person is fully God.

The Father is God. The New Testament speaks very often of God the Father. This can be traced back not only to the influence of the Old Testament (see above) but also to the special emphasis of Jesus Christ who taught his disciples to trust in God as their Father in heaven and to pray to him accordingly. In his Sermon on the Mount alone all the following verses speak of God as Father or of the disciples as children of God: Mt 5:9.16; 5:45.48; 6:1.4.6.8; 6:9.14.15; 6:18.26.32; 7:11.21. There is no real disagreement that the first person of the Trinity is God in the full sense of the word. There has been more disagreement in the history of the Church about the question of the divinity of the Son. But it must be stated here that the fact that God the creator of the heavens and the earth is also our heavenly father in Jesus Christ is of enormous importance for the whole of the New Testament. The Fatherhood of God is a core element of New Testament teaching and of Christianity. Without the Fatherhood of God there is no New Testament, no Gospel and no Christianity.

42. ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν.

The Son is God. Even though we can speak in the Old Testament only of hints towards the divinity of the Messiah, in the New Testament this becomes a core teaching. The following books of the New Testament present the divinity of Jesus Christ already in their opening chapters in words which have become famous in the discussion of this subject: John 1:1-4.14; 1 John 1:1-2:2; Colossians 1:15-20; 2:9; Hebrews 1:1-14; and Revelation 1:1-20.

The one who is called "the Word"⁴³ in John 1:1-4.14 is preexistent ("in the beginning") and divine ("the Word was God"). All things have been created through him (1:3) and he himself is life for all men (1:4). This "Word" has become flesh in John 1:14 which means He has become a human being called the Son of God. He is more than all the prophets because he reveals the invisible God the Father in the full sense (1:18). In agreement with the prologue of John (1:1-18) Jesus himself speaks of his pre-existence and divine glory in John 8:24.58 and 17:5.24. The climax of the book of John with the passion and resurrection narrative leads to the confession of the apostle Thomas "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20:28).

The writer of the Gospel of John also uses the title "Word" for Jesus Christ in his first letter (1 Jn 1:1-3) with only the difference that he calls Jesus "the word of life"⁴⁴. This word is life-giving and pre-existent (1 Jn 1:1), has been made manifest as divine to ear-witnesses, eye-witnesses and touch-witnesses (1:1-2), having come as the Son from the presence of the Father and being known now as Jesus Christ, through whom all believers have fellowship with the Father, as well after having been cleansed by the blood of Christ (1:7.9; 2:1-2). As the Gospel of John starts with the divinity of Christ and ends with it, so 1 John also starts and ends with the same important teaching proclaiming Jesus Christ as "the true God and eternal life" (see 1 Jn 5:20).

The same writer has also received the Revelation where Jesus is again called the "Word", but this time "the Word of God"⁴⁵ (Rv 19:13). The eyes are the same eyes that are found in Rv 1:14 and 2:18 as the eyes of the divine judge (Rv 19:12; cf. Dn 10:5-6). His name "King of kings and Lord of

43. ὁ λόγος

44. περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς

45. ὁ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ

lords" (Rv 19:16) also points to his divinity (cf. Dt 10:17; 1 Tm 6:15). The name of Christ being "the first and the last" (Rv 1:17; 2:8; 22:13) presents him as the almighty God of Israel and creator of the world who has revealed himself under this name in Isaiah (41:4; 44:6; 48:12-13).

One reason why we do not know for sure who has written Hebrews, is that this person did not want to start this letter with his own name in 1:1 as was customary but he wanted to present the greatness and divine glory of the Son of God from first to last outshining all prophets and angels of God. He came as the climax and closure of revelation and salvation history (Heb 1:1-2), the heir of all things (1:2) and the one through whom the world was created (1:2).

The Son is "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature"⁴⁶. Not only have all things been created through the Son, but he is also the one who "upholds the universe by the word of his power"⁴⁷, the sustainer of the universe through his mere word. Jesus has solved the problem of sins by dying for them and establishing a purification for them (1:3). He has taken the seat of greatest honor to the right hand of God the Father (1:3) being greater than the angels (1:4-14) having "inherited a more excellent name" (1:3), the name of "Son" (1:5) who has to be worshiped by all of God's angels (1:6), the name of "God" ruling for ever (1:8-13).

The apostle Paul repeatedly points to the divinity of Christ. For example in Rom 9:5 he speaks of "the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever."⁴⁸ According to Col 2:9 "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily"⁴⁹ in Christ. In Ti 2:13 the waiting for Christ's second coming is called "waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ".⁵⁰

The apostle Peter uses very similar words writing his second letter "to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righ-

46. ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ

47. φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως

48. καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων, θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας•

49. ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς

50. προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

teousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ"(2 Pt 1:1).⁵¹

The synoptic Gospels present John the Baptist as the voice in the desert of Is 40:3 who says "Prepare the way of the Lord" (Mt 3:3; Mk 1:2-3; Lk 3:4; cf. Jn 1:23). In Isaiah "Lord" is the covenant name of God. In the Gospels it is clear that John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus who is stronger than John and comes after him, baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire, saves the truly repentant and throws the others into the eternal burning fire of hell (Mt 3:11-12; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16-17). In other words, these Gospels identify the Lord God of Isaiah 40 with Jesus of Nazareth as God incarnate, the Lord and Savior (cf. Mt 11:27; Lk 2:11). For further discussion of Christ as God and Man see the subject of Christology (chapter 9).

The Holy Spirit is God. In John 13-16 Jesus speaks to the disciples of his going to the Father and leaving them. This made the disciples sad (Jn 16:5-6). But Jesus wanted to encourage them by promising them that the Father would give them "another Helper"⁵² to be with them forever (14:16). The word "paraklētōs" means "helper" or "comforter" or "motivator".⁵³ He is "another" helper of the same kind, meaning he is of the same kind as Jesus. We have just seen that there are many sections in the New Testament that teach that Jesus is God. When Jesus promises another helper of the same kind, he does not mean that something less is given to the disciples but something equal. The Spirit is a person as Jesus is a person. And the Spirit is God as Jesus is God. In the same context (14:18) Jesus assures them: 'I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.' While Jesus is leaving them according to this bodily and is going to the Father and will sit at the right hand of God, he is coming to them in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Or as Jesus puts it in 14:23, 'If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.' Both the Father and the Son make their home in the believer who loves Jesus and keeps his word. If we ask, how they

51. ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ·

52. καὶ ἄλλον παράκλητον δώσει ὑμῖν

53. See in John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7.

make their home in the believer, the answer is "through the Holy Spirit". The Holy Spirit is God and fully represents the other two persons of the Trinity. Though the word "spirit" in Greek is neuter (neither masculine, nor feminine), in John 14:26; 15:26 and 16:14 the Greek equivalent of the English "he"⁵⁴ is used, not "it".⁵⁵ This might be an additional pointer to the personality of the Holy Spirit.

Often "a person" has been defined as someone who possesses intellect, emotions and will. The intellectual capacity of the Holy Spirit can be seen in 1 Cor 2:10-11,⁵⁶ his will is mentioned in 1 Cor 12:11⁵⁷ and his emotions are involved in Eph 4:30. For further discussion of the Holy Spirit as God see the subject of Pneumatology (chapter 13).

There is one God.

As we have seen in section 4.1 it is one core truth of the Bible that there is only one God.

4.2.3 How are the persons of the Trinity distinct from one another?

They are distinct from Eternity.

It is clear from the words of Jesus Christ in John 17:5.24 that the Son and the Father were distinct from each other before the foundation of the world. They are distinct from one another from eternity to eternity.⁵⁸

5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed... 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may

54. ἐκεῖνος

55. ἐκεῖνο

56. See also John 14:26; 15:26; Rom 8:16.26-27

57. Cf. Acts 16:6-7; 8:29; 13:2; 15:28.

58. Cf. Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 249-252.

be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.⁵⁹

If it is evident from this and other passages of the New Testament⁶⁰ that the persons of the Father and the Son can be seen as distinct from even before the foundation of the world, it can also be argued that this is the case with regard to the Holy Spirit. He was already there at the time of creation, because he had part in the creation of the world (Gn 1:2; Ps 33:6; see below). Because he is seen as God in the Old and New Testaments, he is eternal and was present even before creation.

They are distinct in Creation and Salvation.

As soon as we come to the subject of creation and of salvation history, the three persons of the Trinity can be distinguished in their roles in creation and salvation.⁶¹

Their distinction in creation.

1. God the Father spoke the creative words (Gn 1:3.6.9).
2. Through God the Son, the Word, everything was created (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16; Ps 33:6.9; 1 Cor 8:6; Heb 1:2).
3. God the Holy Spirit was "hovering" over the waters and had a part in creation (Gn 1:2; Ps 33:6).

59. καὶ νῦν δόξασόν με σύ, πάτερ, παρὰ σεαυτῷ τῇ δόξῃ ἣ εἶχον πρὸ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον εἶναι παρὰ σοί... 24 πάτερ, ὃ δέδωκάς μοι, θέλω ἵνα ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ κάκεῖνοι ὦσιν μετ' ἐμοῦ, ἵνα θεωρῶσιν τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἐμὴν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι, ὅτι ἠγάπησάς με πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.

60. See Eph 3:14-15; 1:3-4; Rom 8:29; Jn 1:1-5.14.18; Phil 2:5-11; 1 Pt 1:2; Jn 3:16-17; Gal 4:4; 1 Cor 8:6; Heb 1:2; Prv 8:22-31.

61. With Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 248-249.

Their distinction in salvation.

1. God the Father planned salvation and sent his Son (Jn 3:16; Gal 4:4; Eph 1:9-10).
2. God the Son obeyed the Father and accomplished salvation for us through his death and resurrection (Jn 6:38; Heb 5:7-10; 10:5-7).
3. God the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, applies salvation to us (Jn 14:26; 16:7; 15:26) in:
 - (a) regeneration (Jn 3:5-8),
 - (b) sanctification (Rom 8:13; 15:16; 1 Pt 1:2),
 - (c) empowering us (Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 12:7-11),
 - (d) bringing to completion the work that has been planned by the Father and begun by the Son.

Grudem presents the equality of the persons of the Trinity on the one hand and on the other, the differences in their relationship towards the world in a precise and fitting way:⁶²

Thus, while the persons of the Trinity are equal in all their attributes, they nonetheless differ in their relationships to the creation. The Son and Holy Spirit are equal in deity to God the Father, but they are subordinate in their roles. Moreover, these differences in role are not temporary but will last forever... (1 Cor. 15:28).

Grudem also speaks of the "ontological equality but economic subordination" of the Son and the Holy Spirit, that they are "equal in being, but subordinate in role" to the Father.⁶³ The word "economic" here is related to the word "economy" in the sense of "God's economy" or "God's plan" for redemption unfolding within salvation history with different roles for the three persons of the Trinity.⁶⁴

62. *ibid.*, p. 249.

63. *ibid.*, p. 251.

64. The Greek word οἰκονομία is used in the sense of "stewardship" or "(planned)

4.2.4 According to Creeds and Church Fathers / Historical development

The creeds given in the appendix reflect the development of the history of doctrine in the first millennium of the church and especially for the greater part of the first five centuries. The creeds can be seen as a summary of biblical truths to be used as a safeguard against false teaching.

The Apostles' Creed - Against Gnosticism

The old trinitarian structure of the so called Apostles' creed (see ??) affirms God the Father as the creator who is also the Father of Jesus Christ, the Son through whom salvation comes. By proclaiming that the same God is creator and Savior the Christian faith was protected against some gnostic sects of the second century which proclaimed the creator God to be different from the Savior God (against e.g. Marcionism⁶⁵, Valentinians⁶⁶, and Basilidians⁶⁷).

Gnosticism is derived from Greek γνῶσις "gnōsis", knowledge. See already Paul's statement in 1 Tm 6:20-21:

house-holding" in Lk 16:2.3.4; 1 Cor 9:17; Eph 1:10; Eph 3:2; Eph 3:9; Col 1:25; 1 Tm 1:4. Sometimes the translation in the Vulgate is "dispensatio" which corresponds to the English "dispensation" from which the term "dispensationalism" has been coined. Eph 1:10 which talks of God's "economy", "plan", or "house holding" is of the utmost importance for the theological usage and understanding of this term. It connects the idea with salvation history and its climax in Christ. See Eph 1:7-10: "7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." 10 εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς• ἐν αὐτῷ...

65. See e.g. Justin Martyr about Marcion in First Apology, 24 Philip Schaff, ANF01. The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1886), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.html>, p. 227.

66. See e.g. Irenaeus about the disciples of Valentinus in his Against Heresies 1,1,1 *ibid.*, p. 450.

67. See e.g. Irenaeus about Basilides in his Against Heresies 1,24 *ibid.*, p. 499-501.

O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called 'knowledge,' 21 for by professing it some have swerved from the faith."

In Gnosticism not faith in God's word is central, but "knowledge". Salvation is related to "insight" or "knowledge". The system becomes philosophical. Matter is regarded as inferior, the spirit is the real thing. The creator of matter can not be seen as the highest God, but as inferior. God can not become flesh, a human being with flesh and blood. This would be seen as ridiculous. Similarly "resurrection" as the resurrection of the flesh or body is ridiculed (Acts 17:32) or interpreted "spiritually" (see 2 Tm 2:18). These and other verses in the New Testament show certain pre-gnostic teachings or tendencies, but the full-blown gnostic systems of the second century were another and even bigger challenge for orthodox Christianity.

The precursor of what we know as the Apostles' creed was used to immunize the church against the virus or cancer of gnosticism. If the creator and the Savior are one God, then matter and the human body can be good (Gn 1:26-27.31 and God can become flesh (Jn 1:14; 1 Tm 3:16) and the blood of Christ as the blood of God can be precious enough to ransom a whole world (Acts 20:28; Jn 1:29; 19:34; 1 Jn 1:7; 2:2; Rv 5:9-10; Rom 3:25-26; 1 Pt 1:19-20).

Rejection of Monarchianism

Tertullian uses the title "Monarchians" for those who want to defend the divine "monarchy" (rule of one) against polytheistic ideas.⁶⁸ He denotes especially the modalistic monarchianism (see below) with this phrase.⁶⁹ In the history of the church two kinds of monarchianism have been distinguished, dynamic monarchianism and modalistic monarchianism.

68. Friedrich Loofs, *Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte*, edition no. 4 (Halle a.S., 1906), 2 vols, p. 182.

69. Against Praxeas X. See Philip Schaff, ANF03. *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian, Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2006), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.html>, p. 1055.

Dynamic monarchianism or adoptianism. Theodotus the Tanner of Byzantium saw Christ as a mere man who was filled by a divine power (δύναμις) and so "adopted" by God. Therefore this view is called "dynamic monarchianism" or also "adoptianism". He came to Rome and propagated his theory there, but was excommunicated by Bishop Victor of Rome (192-202) in 190 C.E.⁷⁰ The dynamic monarchians upheld strict monotheism by denying the full divinity of Christ. They saw him as a mere man who was made special by the indwelling power of God or by being adopted by God.

Modalistic monarchianism or modalism or Sabbellianism. Modalistic monarchians presented Christ as a "mode" of God (from Latin: *modus*). Since about 215 Sabbellius from Libya was the leader of the modalists in Rome. The one God has three manifestations or forms (μορφαί) or faces (πρόσωπα). Father and Son are seen as identical (νιοπάτωρ).⁷¹ Sabbellius was excommunicated by Bishop Callistus of Rome (217-222).⁷² The modalists confessed the full deity of Christ but lost the distinction of the Father and the Son (and the Holy Spirit) as different persons. Their opponents therefore called them "patripassians", because in the last consequence the Father has suffered if Father, Son and Spirit are identical.

John 10:30 and 14:9 are often used in support of modalism. But John 10:30 is better understood to mean that Jesus and the father are one in purpose. And John 14:9 in its context clearly distinguishes between Jesus and the Father as well. We agree with Grudem that modalism loses a lot: modalism (1) denies the personal relationship within the Trinity; (2) the intercession of Son and Spirit is lost; (3) Modalism looses the heart of the doctrine of the atonement. Modern representatives of modalism are the "United Pentecostal Church" also called "Jesus Only".⁷³

70. See Heussi, *Kompndium der Kirchengeschichte*, §17s and Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church - Volume II Ante-Nicene Christianity A.D. 100-325* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 574.

71. Heussi, *Kompndium der Kirchengeschichte*, §17x.

72. Loofs, *Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte*, p. 184-185.

73. "Some of the leaders who formed this group had earlier been forced out of the

The Nicene Creed - Against Arianism

The Nicene creed from 325 C.E. and the adjusted Nicene creed of Constantinople from 381 C.E. (see ??) are related to the Arian controversy and the question of the deity of Christ (and 381 C.E.: the deity of the Holy Spirit). Arius was presbyter in the Church of Baukalis in Alexandria, Egypt. The controversy started about 318 C.E. when Arius was teaching about the Son of God that he had a beginning and came into being out of that which was not and was a perfect creation.⁷⁴ He wrote to Eusebius of Nicomedia:

We are persecuted because we have said: "The Son has a beginning, but God is without beginning." We are persecuted because we have said: "He is out of that which was not."⁷⁵

Accordingly Arius taught that "there was a time when the Son did not exist".⁷⁶ The "Word" (Lōgōs) is totally different from the essence of God.⁷⁷ All this, of course, amounts to a clear denial of the full deity of the Son.⁷⁸ Bishop Alexander of Alexandria excommunicated Arius at the Council of Alexandria in 318 C.E. But Arius had also his supporters, e.g. in the person of Eusebius of Nicomedia.⁷⁹ So the controversy went on and widened. The Arians used the term "only begotten" (John 1:14; 3:16.18; 1 John 4:9) to point out that the picture of the birth implies a start of origin. In the same way they understood Col 1:15 to mean that the word "first born" implies that the Son was at some point brought into existence by the Father.⁸⁰

Assemblies of God when the Assemblies decided to insist on a trinitarian statement of faith for its ministries in 1916", Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 242-243.

74. κτίσμα τέλειον Adolf von Harnack, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte - Zweiter Band: Die Entwicklung des kirchlichen Dogmas I (Darmstadt, 1983), p. 201.

75. Translation Lanz. From the Greek original in *ibid.*, p. 197, note 3: Διωκόμεθα ὅτι εἵπομεν Ἀρχὴν ἔχει ὁ υἱός, ὁ δὲ θεὸς ἀναρχὸς ἐστίν. Διὰ τοῦτο διωκόμεθα, καὶ ὅτι εἵπομεν Ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἐστίν.

76. καὶ ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν See Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, §24e.

77. ἁλλότριος καὶ ἀνόμιος κατὰ πάντα τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσίας. See *ibid.*, §24e.

78. Jehovah's Witnesses can be understood as modern Arians.

79. Arius died in 336 C.E. See Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 243.

80. See *ibid.*, p. 243.

To settle the Arian controversy the Roman emperor Constantine I called a council to Nicaea in Bithynia (325 C.E.). The vast majority of the Bishops present at the council came from the East. Athanasius was not a Bishop at that time, but he was there and influential behind the scenes.⁸¹ He was the central figure of orthodoxy in this controversy. The council of Nicaea rejected certain Arian ideas in this part of the creed:

We believe ... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made.

The words "begotten of the Father before all worlds... begotten, not made,"⁸² reject the Arian idea that the eternal Son is a creature and the expression "being of one substance with the Father"⁸³ underlines the essential equality of the Father and the Son with regard to their divine essence which is also against Arian concepts. "Very God of very God"⁸⁴ confesses the full deity of the Son.

In the version of the creed which was confessed in Constantinople in 381 C.E. (see ??) the following part confirms the deity of the Holy Spirit:

And ... in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Giver of life; who proceedeth from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spake by the Prophets.

In a later development of the Western Church⁸⁵ the words "and the Son"

81. Athanasius became archbishop of Alexandria in 328 and died in 373 C.E. Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, §24i.

82. τὸν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων ... γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα

83. ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί

84. θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ

85. The first trace of this phrase as part of the Nicene Creed is found according to Schaff at the third Council of Toledo in Spain, 589 C.E. Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical notes. Volume I. The History of Creeds.*, vol. 1 (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1877), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds1.html>, p. 46.

(Latin: *filioque*) were added after "who proceedeth from the Father" affirming that the Holy Spirit goes forth from the Father and from the Son. This led to the schism between the Oriental and Occidental Churches in 1054 C.E. The Oriental Church (Eastern Orthodox Church) never accepted the "*filioque*" while it became part of the creed in the Occidental Church (Roman Catholic, and later in the Protestant churches as well). The Oriental church understands the procession ἐκπόρευσις of the Holy Spirit from the Father as "an eternal inner-trinitarian process (like the eternal generation of the Son)"⁸⁶ According to doctrine Grudem is in favor of the Western Church here (pointing to John 15:26; 14:26 and 16:7), but says at the same time that it is not right to split the whole church because of such a minor point of disagreement.⁸⁷ One has to heartily agree with this.

The Nicene Creed - Against Subordinationism

Already Origen (ca. 185 - 254 A. D.) taught a kind of subordinationism long before the Arian controversy, but others did it as well. In the Arian controversy the atmosphere got so sensitive that the council then also wanted to reject subordinationism to make sure that the faith be orthodox.

In subordinationism the Son was eternal (not created) and divine, but still not equal to the Father in being or attributes. The Son was inferior or "subordinate" to the Father.

Orthodox doctrine has stated against subordinationism that the Son is equal to the Father in being, but subordinate to the Father in role or function.⁸⁸ A statement in the Bible like the one in John 14:28 "... for the Father is greater than I" would then be understood as speaking of the area of role and function and not of divine essence. According to the divine essence the Son is proclaimed as "being of one substance with the Father".

86. *ibid.*, p. 46.

87. Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 246-247.

88. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 245.

4.2.5 Illustrations and analogies

Sometimes people try to give illustrations for the doctrine of the Trinity from the realm of nature or human experience. But often on closer scrutiny the illustration does not present a biblical Trinity but more something which has been rejected as heresy by the church. For example a "man who is both a farmer, the mayor of his town, and an elder in his church... but he is one man". Grudem gives this as an unfitting example because it would teach three roles or modes of the one man. This would be the false teaching of modalism.⁸⁹ The analogy of water as steam, fluid water and ice has shortcomings for similar reasons.

Perhaps it is best to refrain from these illustrations and to cling to the biblical pictures and stories. There we learn that God is God the Father. Jesus is his Son and God. The Holy Spirit is a holy "wind" or "breath" and as such invisible for us, but we can experience him as God. The three are presented in the baptism of Jesus. They are three different persons, every person acting his part, but they are one God. Perhaps it is no coincidence that there is no real counterpart to the mystery of the Trinity in nature. The incarnation of God who became man has to be seen as the greatest miracle of the Bible. This historical event has opened the door into the mystery of the Trinity for us. The only people who can enter into this palace of divine glories are those who have the Holy Spirit as their guide and the Holy Scriptures as their guide book and who step in by faith.

89. Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 240-241.

Chapter 5

God - Creator, Ruler and Loving Father

5.1 **We Can only Know God as far as He Makes Himself Known to Us.**

In the ten commandments God forbids us to make any image of him (Ex 20:4). This implies our inability to recognize God without his grace and help (1 Cor 2:14). We need God's revelation and his heart-transforming grace to know him truthfully.

5.1.1 **Transcendent - separate from us**

One key idea in the Bible is that God is creator and the rest is creation (Gn 1:1; 2:1). Pantheism, the idea that everything is God, is not in the Bible. There is a separation between God as creator on the one hand and all of creation on the other. One famous verse puts God's transcendence in these words (Eccl 5:2):

Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.

Fragile man cannot storm heaven, he is limited to his abode on earth (cf. Gn 11:1-9). God being in heaven is separate from us and at the same time superior.

5.1.2 Immanent - close to us

Another key idea in the Bible is that God is able and willing to be close to us, to be in our world and be with us in our world. The Bible starts with a paradise that had been planted by God for Adam and Eve. Gn 3:8 shows us God visiting this garden and Adam and Eve within it:

8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,¹ and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

It seems that God used to visit man in the garden. They were used to it. They knew immediately that it was God who was coming, but because they had sinned they hid themselves. The question of God, “Where are you?”, has been following mankind ever since. The whole of salvation history is God seeking man that he may repent and come home, home into the presence of God. The calling of Abram and his transformation into Abraham had the purpose that God's blessing would come to all nations (Gn 12:1-3). God's presence on earth in the tabernacle (Ex 25:8) and in the temple (1 Kgs 9:3) is an expression of God's promise (Lv 26:11-12):

11 I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. 12 And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.²

When John speaks of the incarnation of God who becomes man in Jesus Christ he chooses words that resemble the language of the tabernacle (John 1:14):

1. וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת־קוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִתְהַלֵּךְ בַּגֶּן לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם.
2. וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְהָיִיתִי לָכֶם לְאֱלֹהִים וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי לְעָם.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.³

As tabernacle (Ex 40:34-35) and temple (1 Kgs 8:10-11) were filled with God's glory when God took possession of them so Jesus Christ, the Word of God (John 1:1-3; 1 John 1:1-3; Rv 19:13), was full of God's glory. The body of Christ was (John 2:19-21) and still is (Eph 1:22-23) the temple, the address of God in this world. The consummation of all things at the end of time is again God dwelling with man, without temple and without distance in the New Jerusalem, the paradise of God (Rv 21:3.22; 22:1-4; 2:7).

The idea of God's immanence balances the other idea of God's transcendence. Both ideas are true. God is transcendent. We can not reach him by our own efforts. God is immanent. He comes and dwells amongst his chosen people. That is by his grace and by is grace only (Dt 7:7-8). This is the source of ultimate blessedness and eternal joy, knowing God, having fellowship with God and enjoying Him forever (Jn 17:3; Is 35:10; Rv 22:4).

5.1.3 God in different religions and philosophical systems

In Pantheism everything is God and there is no real difference between God and everything else. This will often imply the idea of a non-personal God.⁴

In Deism God⁵ is seen as the creator who has made the world and everything like a big clockwork machine and now lets it run without interfering with it and therefore without answering, for example, prayer.

3. Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ θεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας•

4. Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) is a representative of pantheistic thinking. See Spinoza, Opera - Werke, Lateinisch und Deutsch, Erster Band: Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, Gawlick, G.;Niewöhner, Fr. <ed> (Darmstadt, 1989) and Spinoza, Opera - Werke, Lateinisch und Deutsch, Zweiter Band: Tractatus de intellectus emendatione - Ethica, Gawlick, G.;Niewöhner, Fr. <ed> (Darmstadt, 1989).

5. The Irishman John Toland (1670-1722) was an important Deist. See Heussi, Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte, §105 l.

Atheism is the idea that there is no God at all. The Gods worshiped by mankind are understood as a creation of the fertile imagination of people.⁶

In Dualism there are two eternal principles often understood as opposite to each other or complementary, like light and darkness, good and evil,⁷ the active and the passive principle, yin and yang.⁸

5.2 God is Spirit and anthropomorphisms

In his talk with the Samaritan woman Jesus affirmed:

God is spirit,⁹ and those who worship him must worship
in spirit and truth.

In Lk 24:37 the disciples see Jesus risen from the dead and think he is perhaps a spirit. Jesus answers this misconception and says (Lk 24:39)

See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me,
and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see
that I have.

On the one hand God has revealed himself in Scripture as spirit. This implies that he does not have a human body or appearance. Accordingly phrases used in Scripture like God's "arm" (Ex 6:6; Is 53:1) or "hand" (Ex 6:1) or "mouth" (Dt 8:3) have been understood as anthropomorphisms. That means that Scripture uses language which we can understand to convey truths about God. When God redeems Israel from the slavery in Egypt with "a strong hand" or with "a stretched-out arm", we can understand that God

6. The openly confessing modern Atheists go back to the 18th century. Baron Dietrich von Holbach (1723-1789) was one of the first. See Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, §105 r.

7. Zoroastrianism has certain dualistic tendencies. It is possible that Is 45:7 opposes some form of Zoroastrian dualism. See John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, Word Commentary 25 (Waco: Word, 1987), p. 157.

8. Within Chinese philosophy Taoism can be understood as dualistic.

9. πνεῦμα ὁ θεός

takes personal action and uses his power to free his people. The fact that "man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" points to God's ability to speak and sustain human life by his word.

On the other hand God has revealed himself in Scripture to his chosen people in a kind of human likeness (cf. Gn 1:26-27). It can happen that he comes in human form and appears like a man (Gn 18:1-2; cf. 1 Sm 3:10; Is 6:1; Ez 1:26; Rv 4:3; 5:1). At the same time God is spirit and fills heaven and earth (Jer 23:24). According to the promise that the pure in heart shall see God, there shall be a time that God's people will fully understand what it means that God has revealed himself as spirit and in a kind of human likeness (Mt 5:8; cf. Rv 22:4). It is possible that this mystery is related to the mystery of the Trinity.

5.2.1 God is distant - yet makes himself known

We have already seen from Eccl 5:2 that God is transcendent or distant. But at the same time, God has made himself known through general revelation and special revelation (see section 2.1). He draws people to himself (Jn 6:44) and wants them to seek him and in this regard is not far from anybody (Acts 17:26-28).

5.2.2 Using human language

Throughout the Holy Bible we see God using human language to share his truth and his will with his audience. In the Old Testament mostly Hebrew is used and in some sections Aramaic¹⁰, like Hebrew a Semitic language. The New Testament is written in Greek with some Hebrew and some Aramaic words encountered here and there. The event of Pentecost with the gift of speaking spontaneously in languages not learned is a miraculous indication that God wants to use his New Testament church to speak all languages of this world to spread the Gospel to all nations (Acts 2:1-11; Mt 28:18-20). The fact that God would use human language and human imagery is an expression of His condescension into our world. The greatness of his

10. See Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26; Dn 2:4-7:28; Jer 10:11; Gn 31:47.

creation reveals his enormous magnificence. His knowledge and power is beyond human imagination. Here and there are some hints that God could also use a heavenly language and a heavenly set of pictures which would leave us humans totally behind (Jn 3:12; 1 Cor 13:1). But his great love urges him to speak to us in the language of our hearts.

5.2.3 Remember God is Spirit while using anthropomorphic terms

We should use the anthropomorphic terms of the Bible like "the mighty arm of God" which delivered Israel out of Egypt. They are very illustrative and helpful in bringing God's powerful action to our minds. But at the same time we have to remember that God is spirit (Jn 4:24) and that God fills the heavens and the earth (Jer 23:24).

5.2.4 The nature of language about God - masculine language and imagery

God has revealed himself in Scripture in masculine language and imagery. He is King and Lord (Is 6:5), Father and Husband (Is 63:16; Hos 2:16-20) etc. The language and imagery is always masculine. He may say in Isaiah that he will comfort his people as a mother comforts her child (Is 66:13),¹¹, but this does not mean that God reveals himself as mother in Isaiah. In Isaiah 63:16 and 64:8 he is still called father. This masculine imagery is of course again anthropomorphic language. God is spirit. God is the creator of Adam and Eve as male and female in his image (Gn 1:26-27), but he himself is an eternal spirit and not a sexual corporal being.

Because God choose to reveal himself as King, Lord, Father and Husband etc., we should cling to this biblical masculine imagery and teach it knowing that it is anthropomorphic language. When it comes to fatherhood, Paul seems to understand the Fatherhood of God as the key role model for all fatherhood in heaven and on earth (Eph 3:14-15).

11. Or see the parable in Mt 23:37.

5.3 Naming and describing God

5.3.1 His names revealing what God is for us

The names of God in the Holy Scriptures are one important source to understand and recognize God. The revelation of the divine names is a precious gift of God to his people, therefore they are commanded to sanctify his name (Ex 20:7); Mt 6:9). Often the names of God show something which he personalises for us¹², for example the name "Father" makes us children of God and God's family or God's people.

5.3.2 God's Names in the Old Testament

אל'ל

According to Even-Shoshan¹³ the Hebrew 'ēl is used 235 times in the OT and in most of the cases it denotes the true God, creator of the world. Just in a few verses it speaks of the gods of the Gentiles (Ex 34:14; Dt 32:12; Ps 44:20; 81:9.9; Is 44:17; Mal 2:11). The Plural of 'ēl seems¹⁴ to be אֱלִים 'ēlīm (Ex 15:11; Ps 29:1; 89:7; Dn 11:36).

It can be used standing absolutely on its own for the true God (Nm 12:13; 23:8.19.23; 24:4.16.23). Because 'ēl is a generic word which could mean any god, it is often specified with some other phrase. With the question "Who...?" it points to the one and true God who has no equal (Dt 3:24; 2 Sm 22:32). 'ēlī is my God (Ex 15:2; Ps 22:1). 'ēl Bethel is the God who has revealed himself there to Jacob (Gn 31:13; 35:1.3.7). God has revealed himself to the Fathers also as אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדַּי 'ēl šadday (God Almighty; Gn 17:1;

12. See "God, Names of" in M. Gladstone, N. Hillyer, and et al., *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary Part 1* (Wheaton, Illinois, 1980), p. 571-573.

13. See Abraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Bible* (Jerusalem, 1981), p. 61-62.

14. According to Fr. Brown, S. R. Driver, and Ch. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1980), p. 41-44, the relationship between 'ēl, 'ēlōah and 'ēlōhīm is not so clear. They all seem to be generic words for god that could be used for any god, that means for the true and only God on the one hand and also for the idols of the Gentiles on the other.

28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Ex 6:3). 'ēl is used with the definite article to point to the one and only God (Gn 46:3; 2 Sm 22:31.33).

It is followed in a Hebrew construct chain by a word expressing some kind of quality:

'ēl 'ēmūnāh a God of faithfulness Dt 32:4,

'ēl 'ābīkā the God of your father Gn 49:25,

'ēl dē'ōt a God of knowledge 1 Sm 2:3,

'ēl 'ōlām the Everlasting God Gn 21:33.

'ēl is also combined with adjectives or participles:

'ēl 'elyōn God Most High Gn 14:18.19.20.22,

'ēl gādōl wənōrā' a great and awesome God Dt 7:21,

'ēl ḥay the living God Jo 3:10,

'ēl mēhōlēlekā the God who gave you birth Dt 32:18,

'ēl mōšī'ām mīmīšrāyīm the God who brought them out of Egypt¹⁵
Nm 23:22 (cf 24:8),

'ēl qannā' a jealous God Ex 20:5; 34:14; Dt 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; Jo 24:19,

'ēl raḥūm wəḥannūn a God merciful and gracious Ex 34:6,

'ēl rō'ī a God of seeing me = a God who sees me, who looks after me¹⁶
Gn 16:13,

hā'ēl haggādōl haggībōr wəḥannōrā' the great, the mighty, and the awesome God Dt 10:17,

hā'ēl hanne'ēmān the faithful God Dt 7:9.¹⁷

אלוה 'ēlōah

This word is another generic word used for God or the gods. According to Even-Shoshan¹⁸ 'ēlōah is used 57 times in the OT and in most of the cases it denotes the true God, the God of Israel (see for example Dt 32:15; Job 19:26; 27:3; 40:2). In Dn 11:37.38.39 it is used for different gods of the Gentiles.

15. Translation Lanz.

16. Translation Lanz.

17. This list of idioms making 'ēl more precise is by no means complete.

18. See Even-Shoshan, A New Concordance of the Bible, p. 74-75.

אֱלֹהִים 'ēlōhîm

According to Even-Shoshan¹⁹ 'ēlōhîm is used 2603 times in the OT. It is a generic word and can denote the true God, creator of the world and also the gods of the Gentiles and their idols. It is the most often used generic word for God in the Old Testament. Even if it is grammatically a plural word, it can be used with a verb in the singular (like in Gn 1:1) denoting the one and true God. But it can also be used as a real plural, pointing to the different gods of the Gentiles (see Ps 96:5).

When God is called "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex 3:6) or "the God of Israel" (Gn 33:20) the word 'ēlōhîm is used (cf. also 2 Kgs 2:14).

Often the word 'ēlōhîm is combined with the special covenant name of God Yhwh which is not a generic word but a real name of God (often translated together "the Lord God"). For example in Gn 2 alone this is found in verses 4.5.7.8.9.15.16.18.21.22.

יְהוָה Yhwh

This name is the most important and most dominant name of God in the Old Testament. According to Even-Shoshan²⁰ Yhwh is used 6639 times in the OT. We learn from Exodus that the Lord revealed the meaning of this name to Moses (Ex 3:13-15):

13 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I am who I am."²¹ And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I am has sent me to you.'"²² 15 God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The Lord, the God of

19. See *ibid.*, p. 69-74.

20. See *ibid.*, p. 440-447.

21. אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר אֱדָוָה

22. אֱדָוָה שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם:

your fathers,²³ the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”

Because of the peculiarities of the Hebrew imperfect the phrase ”I am who I am” could also be translated with ”I was who I was” or ”I will be who I will be”. The LXX translates the Hebrew with Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν which is according to NETS ”I am The One Who Is”.²⁴ It is very interesting that the statement in Rv 1:8 ”who is and who was and who is to come”²⁵ could be understood as a paraphrase of the name of God in Ex 3:14.

We are further told in Ex 6:2-3 that the meaning of the name of the Lord was not revealed to earlier generations:

2 God spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the Lord.
3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them.”

Because God revealed the meaning of his name to Moses through whom he also made the covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, we can say that this name is the covenant name of God. It is the name under which God liberated Israel from Egypt and made them his own and chosen people (Ex 19:3-6; 20:2).

Because of the commandment that Israel should ”not take the name of the Lord your God in vain” (Ex 20:7) the Jewish Masoretes did not use the covenant name of God in their reading of the Old Testament text but read ’ăḏōnāy instead which is ”my Lords”, the plural probably used to honor God’s majesty. They did this by writing the four letters of God’s name Yhwh in the main text but adding the vowels of ’ăḏōnāy to it. When later readers combined the letters of Yhwh with the vowels of ’ăḏōnāy they created the non-existent name of Jehovah for God.

23. יהוה אלהי אבותינו

24. Pietersma and Wright, A New English Translation of the Septuagint

25. ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος

The name Yhwh is also combined with the plural word for armies or hosts ("the Lord of hosts"²⁶ ; 1 Sm 1:3.11; 4:4; 15:2; 17:45; 1 Kgs 18:15 etc.). The hosts are probably mainly the heavenly hosts (Jo 5:14; 1 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chr 18:18), but Israel's army is also part of God's armies (Ex 12:41). The title "Lord of hosts" celebrates God as almighty ruler of the world.²⁷

There are some special names which include the name Yhwh in the following verses:

Gn 22:14 Yhwh yīr'eh "The Lord will see"²⁸,

Ex 17:15 Yhwh nīssī "The Lord is my banner",

Jer 23:6 and 33:16 Yhwh šīḏqēnū "The Lord is our righteousness."

Jgs 6:24 Yhwh šālôm "The Lord is Peace."

Ez 48:35 Yhwh šāmmāh "The Lord is there."

אֲדֹנָי 'ăḏōnāy

We have already seen that 'ăḏōnāy ("my Lords") is read for the covenant name of God. But it is also a name of God in its own right and used in Gn 15:2²⁹ and onwards. According to Even-Shoshan³⁰ 'ăḏōnāy is used 425 times in the OT.

Other Names of God

The list of all the names of God in the OT is much longer. God is the "Holy one of Israel" (Ps 71:22; 78:41; 89:19; Is 1:4; 5:19 etc.), he is "the First and the Last" (Is 44:6; 48:12), the "Ancient of days" (Dn 7:9), the "God of gods and Lord of lords", (Dt 10:17) etc.

26. The "hosts" can also be combined with "God": "God of hosts" (2 Sm 5:10) or "Lord God of hosts" (Amos 4:13).

27. The LXX translates the Hebrew phrase sometimes with κύριος σαβαωθ (Is 1:9) or with κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων (1 Kgs 18:15) or with κύριος παντοκράτωρ (2 Sm 7:8).

28. Translation Lanz.

29. Here 'ăḏōnāy is used together with Yhwh and therefore it is translated "O Lord God" following the Hebrew custom of the Masoretes and not "O Lord Lord".

30. See Even-Shoshan, A New Concordance of the Bible, p. 17-18.

5.3.3 God's Names in the New Testament

ὁ θεός Thēōs

This word is the equivalent to the OT generic words for God we have seen before. It is used 1314 times in the NT.³¹ It can denote the one and only true God and the gods of the Gentiles. Most of the time it means the true God (Mt 1:23). In some NT instances it points to the idols (e.g. 1 Cor 8:5). The English word "theology" (teaching about God) contains it in its first part.

ὁ κύριος Kyriōs

Kyriōs means "lord" and is used 719 times in the Greek NT³². It can denote any lord and the LORD. Mary for example calls the supposed gardener in John 20:15 "Sir" (Kyriē). The owner of a slave is called his "master" (Col 4:1; Acts 16:16). In the title of Jesus in Rv 19:16 "King of kings and Lord of lords" it is clear that Jesus is the highest Lord above all the other rulers which might be called "lords" in this world, in heaven or on earth.

One of the most important functions of Kyriōs in the NT is in the way it is used as the equivalent of the OT 'ăḏōnāy for the covenant name of the God of Israel. When the NT quotes the OT (quite often, according to the LXX), Kyriōs is used for the name of God Yhwh in the OT.³³ This is combined with the fact that Jesus is also called Kyriōs (compare Ps 110:1 and Mt 22:44; Acts 2:34-36) which makes this a divine title of enormous importance in the New Testament and in the whole Bible. In Paul's key Christian confession that Jesus is "Lord" (1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:9-11) it is clear that Paul understands Jesus to be Lord in the sense of being God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (compare Phil 2:9-11 with Is 45:23-24). This fits his own conversion experience near Damascus where he saw a divine theophany and asked "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5), receiving the answer "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." From this day onward the

31. According to Wiktionary, Concordance: New Testament Greek, [accessed May 14, 2013], http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Concordance:New_Testament_Greek.

32. According to *ibid*.

33. Compare e.g. Rom 10:13 and Joel 2:32.

fact that 'Jesus is Lord' was the foundation of his new life and new theology.

The idea that 'Jesus is Lord' is true for all writers of the Gospel books. In Jn 20:28 Thomas confesses Jesus as his Lord and his God. Fulfilling the words of Is 40:3 John the Baptist preached to prepare the way for the Lord in Mt 3:3; Mk 1:2-3 and Lk 3:4-6. And who comes after John? Jesus the Lord who is way mightier than even David (Mt 22:44; Mk 12:36; Lk 20:42).

We have seen above that the title of the OT "the Lord (God) of hosts" is sometimes translated by the LXX with κύριος παντοκράτωρ Kyriōs pantōkratōr, the Lord Almighty. This is reflected by Paul in 2 Cor 6:18. In the Revelation given to John this is used quite remarkably (Rv 1:8³⁴; Rv 4:8; Rv 11:17; Rv 15:3; Rv 16:7; Rv 16:14; Rv 19:6; Rv 19:15; Rv 21:22).

ὁ πατήρ *patēr*

The word father is used 414 times in the NT³⁵ and quite a substantial number of times it denotes God as the heavenly father. We have seen that God is also seen as a father in the OT. So this is nothing new. But new is the focus and the emphasis Jesus Christ put on God as the Father. As the Father proclaims him as his beloved Son (Mt 3:17; 17:5), so the Son teaches the disciples to pray to God as "Our Father in heaven" (Mt 6:9) and he reveals God's name as the name of the Father (Jn 17:1.5.6.11; 17:21.24.25). Accepting Jesus, the Son of God, opens the door for us to become God's children (Jn 1:12; 3:3.5; Gal 3:26; Rom 8:14-16). This is an enormous privilege and one of the greatest joys of the New Covenant.

ὁ λόγος *Lōgōs*

It is especially John in his writings who presents Jesus as the "Word" in Jn 1:1-4.14, as the "Word of Life" in 1 Jn 1:1-3 and as "the Word of God" in Rv 19:13. The way John combines this teaching with "the beginning" shows that he wants this title to be understood in the context of Gn 1 as the word through which God the Father has created all things. Jesus as the Word is

34. κύριος, ὁ θεός, ... ὁ παντοκράτωρ and similar in the following verses in Rv.

35. According to Wiktionary, Concordance: New Testament Greek.

the means of God the Father to create the world and to reveal himself to the world. Peter comes close to this idea when he says that "the Spirit of Christ" was in the prophets (1 Pt 1:11) or when he insists that the prophecies point to the coming of Christ (2 Pt 1:16-21). In a way the whole of the New Testament agrees with this by claiming that the Old Testament prophecies had to be fulfilled in Christ (Mt 5:17-20; Lk 24:26-27,46-47; Jn 5:46).

Other Names of God

As God is the "First and Last" in Isaiah (Is 44:6; 48:12), Jesus is the "First and Last" in Revelation (Rv 1:17; 2:8; 22:13). As God is "God of gods and Lord of lords" in Dt 10:17, God is "the King of kings and Lord of lords" in 1 Tm 6:15 and Jesus is "King of kings and Lord of lords" in Rv 19:16. Again, this list of the names of God is not a complete one.

Chapter 6

God's Attributes

6.1 Consistent qualities of his being

We now come to the attributes or qualities of God which are taught in Scripture. We will see that certain main attributes of God are consistently taught throughout salvation history, for example God's love and kindness. Still, there is a progress in revelation where many things become clearer and sharper by God's self-revelation through the Son.

6.1.1 God's attributes belong equally to all three persons of the Trinity.

This is especially true for the Trinity which is a deep divine mystery whose greatest and clearest revelation was left for the time of the New Covenant. The qualities or attributes of God describing the divine being are true for all three persons of the Trinity. As we have seen, orthodox faith claims that the three persons of the Trinity are equal according to their divine essence and only according to their role in salvation history subordinate. Here we are talking of the divine essence or divine being.

6.1.2 God's attributes are essential to his being.

The divine attributes we find in Scripture are essential to God's being. His truthfulness, for example, is such that he is not able to lie (Nm 23:19; Heb 6:18). God is Almighty, but he is almighty in agreement with his own essence or being. He always remains true to himself.

6.1.3 No one attribute is lifted up at the expense of others.

There is an inner harmony of God's attributes or qualities. For example his holiness and his love and his righteousness are in harmony with each other. There is an eternal, deep and harmonious unity and simplicity of God's divine essence which means that all his attributes agree and are at peace with each other.

6.1.4 Affirming God's attributes does not mean we fully know God.

On the one hand God has revealed himself to us in Scripture in a perfect way. But on the other hand we are limited in our understanding of God's revelation because of our own weakness in this time in the world (1 Cor 13:9-12).

6.1.5 God is different as compared to human qualities.

When the Scripture presents God's attributes, it uses a lot of words and pictures which we know from our own human world: righteous, loving, kind, strong etc. We will have to keep in mind that God is vastly greater than we are and that he is unlimited in his divine being in every respect. The words used sound similar to things we know and this helps us to understand. But still there are great differences between God and us. We as temporary beings can not really understand what eternity is or what a being without beginning is. We as imperfect and sinful human beings can not really fathom how perfect and holy and loving God is.

6.2 Different Ways of Categorizing God's Attributes - Incommunicable Attributes

There are different ways of categorizing God's attributes. One possible way which we also follow here¹ is to distinguish between his communicable attributes and his incommunicable attributes which means that some of his attributes are exclusively divine and cannot be shared by any creature. These are the incommunicable attributes. But other divine attributes can be shared with some creatures up to a certain extent. These are the communicable attributes. We start with the incommunicable attributes which are the prerogative of the divine nature.

6.2.1 Independence and self-sufficiency

God does not need anybody or anything to exist or be happy. He is independent and self-sufficient (Acts 17:24-25):

24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

The idea that God is creator of everything and does not need his creation is also found similarly in Job 41:11 and Ps 50:10-12. Rv 4:11 presents the idea that everything was created out of the sheer will of God and that God therefore is worthy to be worshiped. But he does not depend on the adoration of his creatures. John 17:5 and 24 speak of the glory of the Son in the presence of the Father before the world came into being and of the love of the Father for the Son before the foundation of the world:

5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed... 24

1. For this section see Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 156-180.

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

While the above mentioned verses speak in a more negative way of God's independence that he does not need his creatures, the two verses in John give us a glimpse of the eternal love, glory and fellowship within the Trinity. God is in himself eternally glorious, loving and self-sufficient.

6.2.2 Unchangeableness

We as temporary creatures live in a constant flow of change. In contrast to this, God does never change (Ps 102:25-27):

25 Of old you laid the foundation of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.
26 They will perish, but you will remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.
You will change them like a robe,
and they will pass away,
27 but you are the same, and your years have no end.

The idea that God never changes and stays forever the same is also proclaimed in Mal 3:6 and James 1:17.

6.2.3 Eternity

Moses proclaimed the eternity of the Lord God in these wonderful words (Ps 90:2):

2 Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.²

2. וְמִעוֹלָם עַד-עוֹלָם אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים

The impossibility to fathom the eternity of God is also taught in Job 36:26. For us temporary beings time starts with Gn 1:1, but the one who created everything "in the beginning" was of course before the beginning. He is beyond the dimensions of time and space which he himself created. He is not subordinate to those realities which are connected to everything created.

Rv 1:8 seems to look back to Ex 3:14 and to present God as the one who is master of the past the present and the future, being himself not subjected to time. In John 8:58 Jesus hints to his own eternity as he does in 17:5 and 24. This is also how John starts his gospel: He points to the eternity of the Word (John 1:1-3.14).

6.2.4 **Omnipresence**

The most beautiful proclamation of the omnipresence of God is given to us by David (Ps 139:7-10):

7 Where shall I go from your Spirit?
 Or where shall I flee from your presence?
 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
 If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
 9 If I take the wings of the morning
 and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
 10 even there your hand shall lead me,
 and your right hand shall hold me.

The teaching that God is everywhere in creation at the same time is also found in Jer 23:23-24 and in the NT with regard to the person of Jesus in Mt 28:18-20.

6.2.5 **Unity and simplicity**

Unity, of course, means that God is one, but also that he is not composed of different parts or elements. The same idea is conveyed by his simplicity. There is no dualism in God. He is one and he is "simple", he is not composed from different parts. There is no dualism in God with a fight between light and darkness. He is light and in him there is no darkness (1

Jn 1:5). He is love, eternal, steadfast and strong (1 Jn 4:8; Ex 34:6-7). The idea of the unity or simplicity of God is also related to the fact that if God were composed of different parts, then these parts were "before" the being of God and in consequence God would be not the first and not unchangeable. The unity and simplicity of God is thus related to his eternity and his unchangeableness.

6.3 Different Ways of Categorizing God's Attributes

- Communicable attributes

We now come to those attributes of God which he can share up to a certain measure with his elect.³

6.3.1 Spirituality

In his answer to the question of the woman of Samaria about the right place of worship, Jesus said that from now on the place of worship would not be important but to worship God in spirit and truth, because God is spirit (Jn 4:24):

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

With the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost a new era has started where God is worshiped in spirit and truth. The gift of the Holy Spirit is what Jesus was speaking of to the woman (Jn 4:10,14; 7:37-39). Jesus here clearly teaches God's spirituality. He is eternal spirit (Heb 9:14). By giving us his Spirit he restores our spirituality (Gn 2:7; Jn 20:22; 1 Cor 15:44-45) to revive our spirit and make us alive again (Eph 2:1.6). God's spirituality is a good example of a communicable attribute because he grants us his Spirit and so lets us take part in his spirituality (1 Cor 2:10-12). Our human spirituality is realized on a deeper level (1 Cor 14:14; Rom 8:16). Through God's Spirit we can truly serve him (Phil 3:3) .

3. For this section see Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 185-221.

David had already recognized the implications of God's Spirit being everywhere, and that he could not flee anywhere from the Spirit's presence (Ps 139:7-10). Solomon knew that God was greater than all the heavens (1 Kgs 8:27). The temple could not contain God's full presence, but God could graciously accept this house as a place to make his name known. Because God is spirit, Israel was not allowed to make idolatrous images of God (Ex 20:4-6). Isaiah implies God's spirituality in his parallelism in Is 31:3.

6.3.2 Invisibility

Paul speaks of God when he says in 1 Tm 6:16:

... who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.⁴ To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

God is invisible for mortal human beings (see the Greek original text). The same idea is often repeated in Scripture (Jn 1:18; 6:46; 1 Tm 1:17 ; 1 Jn 4:12; Ex 33:11.20-24.

Because God the Father is invisible, Christ the Son is important as the image of God to reveal God and His character (Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). To the request of Philip to show them the Father, Jesus could answer (Jn 14:9):

“Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?

God is invisible for us human beings as we are now. There are some promises for the future that the redeemed will see God (Mt 5:8; 1 Cor 13:12; Rv 22:3-4; 1 Jn 3:2).

The vision of God in 2 Cor 3:18 speaks of a spiritual contemplation of the Lord by faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit which happens now in the midst of troubles and sufferings (2 Cor 4:1-18) transforming us into his image.

4. ὃν εἶδεν οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ ἰδεῖν δύναται•

6.3.3 Omniscient knowledge

When it comes to the subject of the omniscience of God, it is again David who contemplated this in great poetic depth (Ps 139:1-6). One only has to multiply this knowledge of God with the number of human beings on the planet to get a glimpse of God's powerful mind. At the same time God's Spirit knows all of God and can not be searched by human intellect (1 Cor 2:10-16).

God knows everything (1 Jn 3:20), even the number of hairs on all human heads and all the sparrows under the sky (Mt 10:29-30). He does not only know the real future, but even the potential future (1 Sm 23:11-13; Mt 11:21.23; 2 Kgs 13:19), meaning what would happen, if a certain course of action would be taken. He knows the miracles of his creation in his perfect knowledge (Job 37:16), he knows the past and the future (Is 46:9-10; 42:8-9;

God's knowledge and ideas are totally supreme compared to ours (Is 55:9). Despite knowing everything, God can willingly decide to forget the forgiven sins of his people (43:25).

6.3.4 Wisdom

God not only has perfect knowledge, but he can use his knowledge and genius in perfect and divine wisdom (Job 9:4; 12:13), so that nobody can challenge him. He is so wise that he is called "the only wise God" (Rom 16:27). But he is happy to share his wisdom with people in need of it who ask in faith (James 1:5). To share in this wisdom, man needs the fear of the Lord (Ps 111:10). All works of God reflect his wisdom (Ps 104:24).

According to Eph 3:10 the church is a means to show "the manifold wisdom of God ... to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places". On the one hand the "word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing" (1 Cor 1:18), but on the other the crucified Christ is "the power of God and the wisdom of God" for those "who are called, both Jews and Greeks" (1 Cor 1:24.30). God rules the whole world in his power and wisdom so that "all things work together for good" for his chosen people (Rom 8:28).

After showing God's ways with Israel in the past, present and future

and writing one of the deepest sections of Holy Scripture (Rom 9-11) Paul closes his teaching with worshipping God for the depth of his wisdom (Rom 11:33).

6.3.5 Truthfulness and faithfulness

Truthfulness and faithfulness are very close in the Old Testament. People who speak the truth and cling faithfully to it, can be trusted. In this sense God is truthful and can be trusted, because he promises and then fulfills his promises. He is a God of faithfulness (Dt 32:4) who does not lie (Nm 23:19; Heb 6:18; Ti 1:2). He is "the only true God" (Jn 17:3; Jer 10:10-11). Believers can trust God because his words are true (2 Sm 7:28; Prv 30:5; God hates lying lips (Prv 12:22) and forbids false witness and lies (Ex 20:16; Eph 4:25).

6.3.6 Goodness

The fact that God is eternally good is celebrated more than once in the Old Testament (Ps 100:5; 106:1; 107:1). Goodness can be tasted and seen (Ps 34:8). God himself is the greatest good for a believer (Ps 73:25-26.28), but he also gives all kinds of good to the faithful (Ps 84:11); everything must work out for their good (Rom 8:28.32). Only God is really good (Lk 18:19). Because he is good, his law and holy will is good and perfect (119:68; Rom 12:2). The good God is the source of every truly good gift (Jas 1:17).

6.3.7 Love

One of the greatest sentences of the Holy Bible is John's short statement: "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). One of the most famous Bible verses is John 3:16:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

The willingness of Jesus Christ to suffer and die proved to the world that he loves the Father (14:31). The love of the Father towards the Son is eternal

and was already there before the foundation of the world (Jn 17:24). The loving relationship of the persons of the Trinity even before the foundation of the world shows us that God is love from eternity to eternity. We can only love God because he first loved us (1 Jn 4:19). We can not love the world and the Father (2:15). The love of God is to keep his commandments (1 Jn 5:3). The love of God towards us is revealed in Christ's death for us (Rom 5:8). This love of Christ is not only for all, but also very personal (Gal 2:20). God's loving character is also reflected in the fact that love of God and of our neighbor is central to God's law (Mt 22:37-38).

6.3.8 **Mercy**

When David had to choose the punishment for his sin, he preferred to "fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man" (2 Sm 24:14). The mercy of God is the love of God for those who are in need. God revealed himself to Moses as merciful and gracious ('ēl raḥûm waḥannûn; Ex 34:6).

When we follow Jesus Christ through the Gospel, we see him as a man of compassion and mercy who helped people in need (Mt 9:27,36). God became man in Jesus Christ so that he would be a merciful high priest to save people from their sins (Heb 2:14-18; 4:15-16). The merciful Christ teaches his disciples to be merciful (Mt 5:7) and so reflect this attribute of God in their lives.

6.3.9 **Grace**

When Moses wished to see God's glory, God taught him about his grace (Ex 33:19):

I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

This shows the relationship between the covenant name of God and his sovereign grace and mercy. The name of God is "I am who I am" (Ex 3:14).

Nobody can control God or His being. He is sovereign, and his grace and mercy are sovereign. God's grace is the root and source of election and salvation and to whom He shows mercy or not is totally his own choice (Rom 9:13-18).

People are chosen by God's grace and not on the basis of their own goodness or works (Rom 11:4-6). This is also the meaning of the famous passage in Rom 3:23-25. On our human side there are the sins of all, on God's side there is His saving grace through faith in Jesus Christ. God's grace makes believers humble, because they are what they are not out of their own effort or strength but out of God's mercy and grace.

6.3.10 **Patience**

God's patience is expressed in his being "slow to anger" (Ex 34:6; Nm 14:18). Man can sin a lot and progress very far on his way of wickedness until God's anger will react and punish him. God is not easily and quickly provoked to act with punishment. Paul speaks in a similar way of God's patience when he pictures a sinner who abuses God's patience just to continue in his evil ways (Rom 2:4-5). God's patience often describes His behavior before judgment takes place. It is meant to give people time to repent (1 Pt 3:20; 2 Pt 3:9).

6.3.11 **Humility and meekness**

The incarnation of God becoming man is unique in all of history. It is the greatest miracle where innumerable other miracles stem from. It is an awesome truth that the resulting God-Man would be a master in humility and meekness (Mt 11:27-30):

27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. 28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,

and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy,
and my burden is light.

What would our behavior be if we could say, "All things have been handed over to me"? How would we handle our enemies? Would we be poor or rich, serving or being served? When James and John used their mother to try to get the best government seats in the coming kingdom of Christ, Jesus taught them this lesson (Mt 20:27-28):

Whoever would be first among you must be your slave,
even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,
and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Do we learn something here only about the humility of Christ or is there also something like the "humility and meekness of God"? What do we learn from Christ when he says, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9)? In the Old Testament David speaks of God's "gentleness" or "meekness"⁵ in Ps 18:35.

The parallel in 2 Sm 22:36 uses "gentleness" (ESV)⁶

It is Paul who puts a strong emphasis on the crucified Christ in 1 Cor 1:18-25. He speaks of "the foolishness of God" and "the weakness of God". At the same time Paul makes it clear that this is a dangerous truth. It is a weapon of God to "destroy the wisdom of the wise" (1 Cor 1:19) and "to bring to nothing things that are" (1 Cor 1:28). The fact that God might seem weak and that his message might seem foolish makes it possible to ignore God, to reject his message and walk into perdition.

In Rom 10:21 God looks weak enough when he waits for the repentance of Israel:

But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my
hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

5. The Hebrew וְעֲנָוִתָּהּ is from עָנָה which means "humility, meekness, condescension" according to Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 776.

6. The Hebrew וְעֲנָה is a Hebrew Qal construct infinitive with suffix from the verb עָנָה which means in the Qal stem "1. be put down, become low, 2. be depressed downcast, 3. be afflicted" according to *ibid.*, p. 776.

If you would see a father waiting for his children to come to him with arms held out, starting from 8.00 am and standing like this until 6 pm, what would you think? What would you think about his ability to control and teach his children, when you realize that they do not come, but laugh about him? It is a dangerous truth that God might behave so humbly, so meekly and in seeming weakness.

6.3.12 Holiness

A central verse about God's holiness is found in Lv 19:2⁷:

Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.

This is another excellent example of "communicable attributes". God is holy.⁸ We should be holy and so glorify our God.

One way that God taught His holiness was to make his mobile throne inaccessible to normal Israelites in the tabernacle and in the temple because it was in the most holy place where only the specially anointed high priest could enter once a year on the day of atonement (Ex 26:33; 29:44; 30:25-33).

Another part of this teaching of holiness was that the place of worship itself was holy and only people who had sanctified themselves were allowed to enter (Ps 24:3-4). There were even holy times set aside to worship God and seek his presence (Ex 20:11).

In the NT God educates his children in holiness so that they become holy and may be able to see him (Heb 12:10,14; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1). Gentiles are now together with the Jews in Christ in one holy temple (Eph 2:21; 5:26-27).

7. Cf. Lv 11:44-45; 1 Pt 1:16; Ex 19:4-6.

8. There are many verses teaching God's holiness: Ps 99:9; Ps 71:22; 78:41; Is 1:4; 5:19; 6:3; Rv 4:8 and more.

6.3.13 Peace and Love for Order

The church being the temple of the Holy Spirit also means that the church meeting should reflect God's character. When Paul writes to the Corinthians about the order of a service he builds it partly on the fact that God is a God of peace (1 Cor 14:31-33).

The opposite of peace here is confusion or disorder. God being a God of peace⁹ also means that he dislikes disorder and loves good order.

When Paul calls Christ the peace in person (Eph 2:14), he can do this following Old Testament predictions about the coming Messiah as peace (Mi 5:5) or prince of peace (Is 9:6-7). If people follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they will see peace as a part of the fruit of the Spirit in their lives (Gal 5:22).

6.3.14 Righteousness and Justice

Abraham build his intercession for Sodom and the cities around it (and especially for Lot) on the fact that God as the judge of the whole world will be just (Gn 18:25).¹⁰ Moses praises the righteousness of God in his song (Dt 32:4):

The Rock, his work is perfect,
for all his ways are justice.
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,
just and upright is he.

The righteousness of God also has the effect that his revelation is just (Ps 19:8; Is 45:19). Man can not really accuse God and be successful in it (Job 40:2.8; Rom 9:20-21).

The climax of the revelation of God's righteousness is found in the sacrifice in the blood of Jesus Christ to atone for the sins of the world (3:21-26). The genitive of "God's righteousness" is explained by the apostle Paul

9. For God as a God of peace or Lord of peace see also Rom 15:33; 16:20; Phil 4:9; 1 Thes 5:23; Heb 13:20; 2 Thes 3:16.

10. The righteousness of God as judge is repeated many times throughout the Bible: Rom 1:18.32; Rv 15:3; 16:7; 19:2.

in 3:26 in two ways, first "so that he might be just" and second "and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus". The first relates to God himself being righteous, the second to his granting sinners a righteousness free of charge by faith only in the power of the blood of Christ.

6.3.15 Jealousy

The jealousy of God is God's love insofar as he wants to have an exclusive love-relationship with his chosen people. The background of this imagery is that God is seen as the husband and his chosen people as wife. God loved Israel and liberated them out of the slavery in Egypt. God offered Israel the exclusive covenant relationship to be God's holy nation (Ex 19:4-6). The consequence is that Israel should have no other God in addition to God and that Israel should make no idolatrous images of God (Ex 20:5-6):

You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God,¹¹ visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Paul presents very similar ideas of the bride and bridegroom imagery in 2 Cor 11:2 with regard to Christ and the church in Corinth. The jealousy of God is a good example of the different aspects of God's love. When he punishes the idolatry of Israel, He fights for the undivided attention and love of his beloved "wife". The same is true for Paul's struggle to lead the Corinthians to a holy life in 2 Cor 10-13 and protect them from false apostles and false teachers.

6.3.16 Wrath

The wrath of God is one response of God's holy character to the sins of people. One famous example is the idolatry of Israel with the golden calf and God's anger because of this sin when he said to Moses (Ex 32:10):

11. God as 'ēl qannā', a jealous God, is also seen in Ex 34:14; Dt 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; Jo 24:19.

Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.

Because of the intercession of the mediator Moses, God did not destroy Israel in his wrath. But the Israelites continued to provoke God's wrath (Dt 9:7-8). In the renewal of the covenant in Deuteronomy they were warned of the danger of God's wrath (Dt 29:23).

When Josiah heard the words of the book of the law of God that had been found in the temple, he realized that the wrath of God was a real danger hovering over them and he repented and initiated reforms (2 Kgs 22:13).

Within the OT Ps 103:8-9 may help us to understand the framework for God's wrath or anger better:

8 The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
9 He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.

While God's mercy, grace and love are ongoing and eternal, his anger is a temporary reaction to our sins. It will not be kept for ever. Comparatively, God may punish to the third and fourth generations, but He shows grace and mercy to a thousand generations (Ex 34:6-7; Is 54:8-10).

In the NT, God's wrath remains on those who do not trust the Son of God (Jn 3:36). According to Eph 2:3 all believers were spiritually dead and by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind, before God had mercy on them and made them alive together with Christ.

It is interesting that the apostle Paul gives a summary of the content of his letter to the Romans in Rom 1:16-17 and then begins the exposition of the Gospel with the wrath of God being revealed from heaven "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth" (Rom 1:18). From Rom 2:5-8 it becomes clear that there is a correspondence between the sins of an individual and the wrath of God coming upon him on judgment day.

This correspondence of evil works of men and God's wrath as an answer is also found in Col 3:6. God wants to show his wrath towards the "vessels of wrath prepared for destruction" (Rom 9:22).

God's wrath came upon the Jews in the wilderness because of their lack of faith (Heb 3:11) and also on them at the time of Paul because they wanted to hinder the spreading of the Gospel (1 Thes 2:16).

Salvation from God's coming wrath is granted through Jesus Christ (Rom 5:9; 1 Thes 1:10; 5:9).

When the sixth seal was opened, John saw prophetically the events of judgment day (Rv 6:15-17): All of mankind who are not redeemed by the blood of the lamb will want to hide themselves on the day of the wrath of God the Father and God the Son because they know that nobody can stand on this day.

According to Rv 19:15 Jesus is the executor of God's wrath on that day by using the word of God that goes forth from his mouth like a sword (compare Is 11:4; 49:2).

It is good to remember that the Lord Jesus loves righteousness and hates wickedness (Heb 1:9; Zec 8:17). Therefore the revelation of God's wrath in judgment will not be against the rules of justice and righteousness, but according to them (Rv 15:4; 16:7; 19:2.11).

There is one important piece of information found in 2 Pt 3:9-10 with regard to judgment day that we should take to heart:

9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 10 But 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 coming of the day of the Lord has not happened yet according to Peter because God wants nobody to perish but to reach repentance. This also means that repentance after this day is not possible. Otherwise this argument would be fruitless and the day could come any time, because people could repent afterwards. The seriousness of God's wrath on the day of judgment is that it implies a decision for all eternity (Rom 2:5-7; Dn 12:2-3; Rv 21:8; 20:10).

6.3.17 Will

God's will is powerful and effective with regard to creation, His sustaining and ruling the world and His salvation. All which has been created, has been created only because of God's will (Rv 4:11). Therefore God is worthy to be honored.

God rules the world both appointing governments and bringing them down according to his will (Dn 4:32; Rom 13:1).

Eph 1:11-12 tells us that God always works according to his will, also in the area of salvation:

11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

The passion and resurrection of Christ happened according to God's ordained plan (Acts 4:27-28). In the same way it could be God's will that a believer has to suffer while following Christ's example (1 Pt 3:17; 4:19).

A believer should humbly plan and live his life knowing that all depends on God's will (Jas 4:13-15).

6.3.18 Freedom

As creator and Lord of his creation God is free. He is not under any compulsion. In contrast to the nonexistence and inability of the idols Ps 115:3 states about God:

Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.¹²

God even rules over the hearts of the rulers of this world in their decisions (Prv 21:1; Dn 4:35; Rv 17:17). He is the King of kings (Dt 10:17), under no rule, but freely ruling everything (Dt 10:17; Rv 19:16).

12. כֹּל אֲשֶׁר-רָצָהּ יַעֲשֶׂה

6.3.19 **Omnipotence, Sovereignty**

The fact that God is omnipotent is overlapping with what has just been said about his freedom. Being the ruler of all, God is sovereign and has all power, is omnipotent. In the OT, "The LORD of hosts" (see section 5.3.2) is a name implying God's absolute power (Ps 24:8.10). The equivalent in the NT is "Lord Almighty" (2 Cor 6:18; Rv 1:8; see section 5.3.3).

In several places it is stated that nothing is impossible for God (Gn 18:14; Jer 32:17.27; Mk 14:36; Eph 3:20).

However, it is possible to misunderstand the biblical doctrine of God's omnipotence, if we think that God could do just anything, good or bad. The doctrine has to be understood within the biblical framework of God's ethical character. As far as a deed would be against God's character, he cannot do it. God cannot lie (Ti 1:2; Heb 6:18). He cannot deny his own faithful character (2 Tm 2:13). He cannot successfully be tempted to do something wicked (Jas 1:13).

6.3.20 **Perfection**

We have already seen in Dt 32:4 that God is perfect in all He does. Ps 18:30 calls God's "way" perfect. In one of the most challenging sections of the Bible Jesus teaches his disciples to love even their enemies and pray for their persecutors. The reason is that they should reflect God's perfect love (Mt 5:45) in their lives and so prove to be true children of God (Mt 5:48):

You therefore must be perfect,
as your heavenly Father is perfect.¹³

6.3.21 **Joyfulness**

In 1 Tm 6:15 Paul calls God "the blessed and only Sovereign"¹⁴ while *makariōs*, the word here translated "blessed", means happy, joyful.¹⁵ 1 Tm

13. Ἔσεσθε οὖν ὑμεῖς τέλειοι ὡς ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν.

14. ὁ μακάριος καὶ μόνος δυνάστης

15. See W. Bauer, K. Aland, and B. Aland, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, edition no.

1:11 presents the same idea. God is in himself joyful and happy. In Gn 1:31 God enjoys the quality of his "very good" creation. God will rejoice over his redeemed and transformed Jeru-salem "as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride" Is 62:5.

Joy is so much part of God's being that people who are following the guidance of the Holy Spirit experience joy as part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).

6.3.22 **Beauty**

One reason why David¹⁶ wanted to stay in the house of the Lord was that he was attracted by the beauty of the Lord (Ps 27:4).

The New Jerusalem is the ultimate place for a believer to see the beauty of God (Rv 22:4). That one important aspect of the beauty of God is a more spiritual beauty may be gathered from some references where believers are encouraged to be beautiful in the presence of God or Christ (1 Pt 3:4; Ti 2:10; Eph 5:27; Rv 19:8).

6.3.23 **Glory**

The glory of God in addition to his own beautiful and glorious person is also his wealth and the splendor of his surroundings. It can be compared with the glory of a king like Solomon (Mt 6:29). The glory of king Solomon would be the glory of his person embedded in his royal surroundings: his clothes,¹⁷ his servants, the greatness of his kingdom, the wealth of his palace, the width and breadth of his kingdom etc. Something like this is envisioned in the words of the Seraphim of Is 6:3:

Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!

The Lord of hosts is the king of kings on his mighty throne (Is 6:1). His dominion is the whole earth which is filled with testimonies of his royal glory.

6 (Berlin, 1988), p. 961.

16. Compare also Asaph's enjoying the Lord in Ps 73:25.

17. Compare Ps 104:1-2; 24:10.

God's own people make up an important part of God's glory (Is 43:7; 1 Pt 2:9; Mt 5:16; Phil 2:15)¹⁸, especially in their future resurrection glory (Dn 12:3; Mt 13:43; 1 Cor 15:43). The beautiful way of the ongoing transformation of the faithful in the struggles of their lives is to contemplate Christ's glory. By seeing the glory of the Lord they themselves are changed into the likeness of Christ (2 Cor 3:18).

In the New Testament Jesus Christ is the revelation of the glory of God par excellence (Jn 1:14; 17:5.24; Heb 1:3; Lk 2:9; Mt 17:2), even in the New Jerusalem for all eternity (Rv 21:23).

18. I understand the "glory of God" in Rom 3:23 not as God's own glory, but as the "glory" or "honor" he gives to a human being. Because all humans have sinned, God cannot praise them, but has to condemn them. Only through God's grace in Christ can they reach a state where God can accept them as his beloved children.

Chapter 7

Creation and Nature

7.1 God Has Created Everything out of Nothing through His Word

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gn 1:1). "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" (Gn 2:1). God created light just by speaking, "Let there be light" (Gn 1:3). And he continued to create through the power of his word (Gn 1:6.9.11.14.20.24.26). "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host" (Ps 33:6).

In the New Testament this creative word of God is identified with Jesus Christ who is the Word of God who became flesh (Jn 1:1-3.14).

Because God the Father created everything through the "Word of God" (Rv 19:13) and "all things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made" (Jn 1:3), there was nothing else before the beginning, before the foundation of the world than God himself. All that was created was created out of nothing through the Word of God, simply by God's speaking. That is impressive! As Hebrews 11:3 puts it:

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things

that are visible.¹

According to the teaching of the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testament God is from eternity to eternity, but the creation was created in the beginning out of nothing through God's word. All created things have a beginning, only God is without beginning and end.

According to biblical teaching there is a difference between the Creator and his creation. They are not one. Pantheism, the idea that everything is God, is not in the Bible.

God who has the power to create things simply by speaking, is almighty, sovereign, unstoppable. The Creator is independent, everything created depends on him.

7.2 God is the Sustainer of his Creation.

God is not only the creator in the beginning, but also the sustainer of his creation all the time. After the catastrophe of the flood God promised stable conditions (Gn 8:21-22).

The seasons of the year are stable by the promise of God, which is the word of God. He is the giver of sunshine and rain (Mt 5:45). The whole Ps 104 is a praise of God the creator and sustainer of all his creations and all his creatures, but see especially Ps 104:27-31).

Because God has created everything in his great wisdom and he sustains everything with his great power, the psalmist wishes God to enjoy his works. It is interesting that God may enjoy looking at this creation, that he may rejoice in his works.

In the New Testament we are not only told that all things have been created through Jesus Christ the Word of God, but also that all things are sustained by Jesus Christ the Lord (Col 1:15-17). In Christ "all things hold together" or he "upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:2-3).

1. πίστει νοοῦμεν κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλέπόμενον γεγενῆναι.

What an idea that Jesus Christ is God who became man and as man still he would uphold the universe through his divine and powerful word. When the soldiers drove the nails into the hands and feet of Christ, Christ himself gave the soldiers their breath to use their muscles and he gave the atoms and molecules of the nails the firmness so that he could be wounded and crucified and shed his blood for us.

On the day of his coming he will use fire to dissolve the elements and let the heavens and the earth pass away which he sustained with all the creatures up to that day in his power (2 Pt 3:7.10-12).

7.2.1 God cares for his creation

God does not sustain his creation in a cool and detached way, he is attached to it, he cares for his creation. We have seen that God can enjoy his creation (Ps 104:31; Gn 1:31). Ps 145:8-10 teaches us God's mercy over all his creation.

In the New Testament the gospel is of course especially preached first to the Jews, then also to the Gentiles, but it is interesting that in Mk 16:15-16 the world wide gospel is the gospel for all creation. Of course, creation here means human beings who can hear the gospel, accept it and be baptized. But still the use of the word is interesting. If we combine this text with Rom 8:18-23, we see that the gospel successfully preached to all of mankind has implications for the whole of creation:

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

On the day of the second coming of Jesus Christ, Jesus will be revealed in his divine glory and with him the sons and daughters of God will be revealed (Col 3:3-4; 2 Cor 6:18; Rom 8:18-19). That is the day all of creation is waiting for. Because Adam had sinned, death and destruction came into the world (Rom 5:12). Adam had been created in the image of God and been appointed to rule the earth (Gn 1:26-28), therefore his sin had such a disastrous effect on all of his dominion.

When Christ the last Adam will come to rule the world together with his own, then "the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom 8:21). The whole world will be born again (Rom 8:22; Mt 19:28). This remarkable hope for creation totally agrees with Ps 145:8-10 and with God's merciful character. God surely cares for his creation (cf. Is 11:6-9; 65:17-25).

7.2.2 God rules his creation in his providence

God has total control over the realm of nature, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father" (Mt 10:29).

God has also total control over the realm of human history and rules over all of heaven (Dt 10:17; Dn 2:20-21; 4:32.34-35; 5:21; Mt 28:18; Rom 13:1; Rv 19:16).

From these sections it is crystal clear that God has always been involved in his creation and kept control and will continue to do so until he ushers in his eternal kingdom of peace where he will finally be all in all (1 Cor 15:28). This biblical view is contrary to Deism where God is the creator who has made the world and everything like a big clockwork machine and now lets it run without interfering with it.

7.3 Angels, Messengers

7.3.1 In the Old Testament

Word used

The Hebrew word used for angels and messengers is מַלְאָךְ *malā'k*.² It is used for somebody sent to perform a certain task or to deliver a certain message. The person sent can be a heavenly angel or a human messenger. Normally this is recognizable from the context. Both the heavenly angels and the human messengers are creatures, having been called into life by the creator.

The angel of the Lord

The angel of the Lord מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה *malāk ădōnay* is found quite often in the OT: Gn 16:7.9.10.11; 22:11.15; Ex 3:2; Nm 22:22.23; Nm 22:24.25.26.27.31; 22:32.34.35; Jdg 2:1.4; 5:23; 6:11.12.21.21.22; 13:3.13.15.16; 13:17.18.20.21.21; 2 Sm 24:16; 1 Kgs 19:7 (pointing back to "an angel" in 19:5); 2 Kgs 1:3.15; 19:35; 1 Chr 21:12.15; 21:16.18.30; Ps 34:7; 35:5.6; Is 37:36; Hag 1:13; Zech 1:11.12; 3:1.5.6; 12:8; Mal 2:7.

It has been suggested in Christian Systematic Theology that "the angel of the Lord" could be Jesus Christ appearing before his incarnation. The reasoning for this is as follows: In some contexts "the angel of the Lord" and God himself seem to be used interchangeable, "the angel of the Lord" appearing as a kind of revelation of God and human beings answering with adoration understanding that they encountered God. See for example Gen 16:7-14; Num 22:31; Judges 13:18-20; Zech 12:8. If God has revealed himself in the Old Testament in a visible appearance, then, it is argued, it would fit, that it is the second person within the Trinity to appear to man (compare Col 1:15).

2. The Hebrew text here and below is taken from Westminster Hebrew Institute, ed., Westminster Leningrad Codex, [accessed May 9, 2011], 2008, <http://www.crosswire.org/sword/modules/ModInfo.jsp?modName=WLC> Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Bible* gives 212 occurrences in his concordance, p. 658f.

By reflecting on this question it is important to note several things with regard to the phrase "the angel of the Lord". When you hear this phrase in English, it sounds like this might always be the same angel. But this is not the case, because at least in two cases the term denotes human beings. In Malachi 2:7 a priest is 'the messenger of the Lord of hosts' and in Haggai 1:13 the prophet is 'the messenger of the Lord'. Because of these verses it is clear that the term *malāk ʾădōnay* can not denote the same person in every instance.

What we can say with certainty is that the phrase "the angel of the Lord" does not point to one and the same angel or messenger in every passage of the Old Testament (the same is true for comparable passages in the New Testament, see below).

But it also sometimes becomes clear from the context that "the angel of the Lord" is a self-revelation of God. Then God uses an angelic appearance to reveal something about himself, see for example Ex 3:2.6.14 or the way Jacob blesses Joseph in Gn 48:15-16:

The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

In these contexts God uses the words and the deeds of his messenger to reveal himself.

Because of the New Testament teaching that Jesus Christ is God and eternal (John 1:1-3), it is of course possible that he appeared in the Old Testament but the when and how is difficult to determine for us because this was not an emphasis in the Old Testament. The Trinitarian self-revelations of God belong more to the New Testament. If the New Testament (e.g. Rv 1:12-16) uses Old Testament texts (here: Dn 7:13; 10:5-6), then we can assume or even know that the person appearing in the Old Testament (in this case to Daniel) is identical with Jesus Christ in his pre-incarnate state.

Tasks and characteristics of angels in the OT

1. They are sent to deliver God's revelation, word, guidance or help to individual human beings.
 - (a) Guidance with a promise. For Hagar about the birth of Ishmael (Gn 16:7.9.10.11); for Abraham about sparing Isaac and about the promises for Isaac (Gn 22:11.15); for Elijah (2 Kgs 1:3.15); for David with regard to the place of an altar to be built, the future place of the temple (1 Chr 21:18); to declare to man what is right for him (Job 33:23); Jacob saw "a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it" (Gn 28:12); Jacob sees the angels of God as a camp of God's soldiers (Gn 32:1-2). Later a representative of God's army camp fights with Jacob (Gn 32:24-30; Hos 12:3-4).
 - (b) Guidance with a threat. Balaam (Nm 22:22.23.24.25; Nm 22:26.27.31; 22:32.34.35).
 - (c) Related to the call of persons. Moses (Ex 3:2); Gideon (Jgs 6:11.12.20.21.21.22.22); the parents of Samson (Jgs 13:3.6.9; 13:13.15.16; 13:17.18.20.21); Zechariah gets guidance for Joshua the high priest through a vision (Zec 3:1-10).
 - (d) Help or salvation in a difficult situation. To save Ishmael and Hagar from death by thirst (Gn 21:17-18); to arrange Isaac's marriage with Rebekah (Gn 24:7.40); Jacob blesses Joseph, "the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys" (Gn 48:15-16); to save Elijah from death by hunger and thirst (1 Kgs 19:5.7); to save those who fear the Lord (Ps 34:7); to save Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from fire (Dn 3:28); to save Daniel from the lions (Dn 6:22); to save the believer from harm (Ps 91:11).
2. They are sent to deliver God's revelation, word, guidance or help to the people of Israel.

- (a) Help and salvation. From Egypt (Nm 20:16); an angel guiding Israel to the promised land with the name of God in him (Ex 23:20-21.23); God threatens to only send an angel, but not go himself among them (Ex 32:34-33:2); the angel of his presence saved them (Is 63:9).
 - (b) God's word or guidance. At Bochim (Jgs 2:1.4); a command to curse Meroz (Jgs 5:23).
 - (c) Angels can talk to prophets who then deliver the message. Zechariah (1:9.13.14.19; 2:3.; 4:1.4.5; 5:5.10; 6:4.5).
3. They are sent to punish.
- (a) Individuals. David's wish for his enemies (Ps 35:5.6); people who do not fulfill their vows (Eccl 5:6).
 - (b) Israel. For David's sin in the census (2 Sm 24:16-17; 1 Chr 21:12.15.16.20.27.30).
 - (c) Gentile nations. Two angels go to Sodom and Gomorrah so that the cities be destroyed but Lot and his family be saved (Gn 19:1.15). God sent destroying angels to judge Egypt and save Israel (Ps 78:49); "And that night the angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians" (2 Kgs 19:35; Is 37:36; 2 Chr 32:21).
4. Angels in visions.
- (a) They can talk and explain things to the prophet who receives the vision (Zec 1:9.13.14.19; 2:3.; 4:1.4.5; 5:5.10; 6:4.5).
 - (b) They are talked to in visions. By riders on horses (Zec 1:11) or by God himself (Zec 1:13).
 - (c) They talk to God or guided by God in favor of God's people. The angel of the Lord (Zech 1:12; 3:4).
5. An angel of the Lord may have great power and be used by God to reveal his own divine power and self. In the burning bush that was not consumed (Ex 3:2.6.14); apparent from the words with which

Jacob blesses Joseph in Gn 48:15-16; the angel guiding Israel to the promised land (Ex 23:20-21); Jacob fighting with God while fighting with an angel (Hos 12:3-4); in Exod 14:19-20 we have another instance where God's self-revelation is mentioned together with an angel, because the pillar of cloud represented the presence of God.

6. Angels are God's powerful warriors and his army (Gn 32:1-2; Ps 103:20; 148:2; Is 37:35-36). "The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2 Kgs 6:17).
7. Angels are called to praise God (Ps 103:20; 148:2.)
8. Angels are spirits (Ps 104:4 combined with Heb 1:7).
9. Angels can bless (Gn 48:16).
10. Humans are compared to angels with their qualities, especially David or his house.
 - (a) "18 If God puts no trust in his servants and attributes folly to his angels, 19 how much more to those who live in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust" (Idea of Eliphaz the Temanite Job 4:18-19).
 - (b) David is as good or blameless in the sight of Achish of Gath as an angel of God (1 Sm 29:9).
 - (c) David is like the angel of God to discern good and evil and has wisdom like the wisdom of the angel of God to know all things that are on the earth (idea of a wise woman of Tekoa 2 Sm 14:17.20).
 - (d) "But my lord the king is like the angel of God; do therefore what seems good to you" (Words of Mephibosheth to David 2 Sm 19:27).
 - (e) "The house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the Lord, going before them" (Zec 12:8);

11. Sometimes people claim that an angel has talked to them. Jacob (Gn 31:11); an old prophet makes a deceitful claim to another prophet (1 Kgs 13:18);

For human messengers

The word for heavenly messengers (angels) and for earthly, human messengers is the same in Hebrew. Only the context can make it clear, whether it is an "angel" or an "messenger". Here are verses which tell us of messengers who are men. Often the people sending them are humans, sometimes it is God. If the sender is clear, he is given in brackets.

Messenger מַלְאָךְ mal'āk or הַמַּלְאָךְ hammal'āk singular without or with definite article: 2 Sm 11:19.22.23.25 (Joab); 1 Kgs 19:2 (Jezebel); 22:13 (Ahab); 2 Kgs 5:10 (Elisha); 6:32.32.33 (King of Israel); 10:8; 2 Chr 18:12 (Ahab); Job 1:14; Prv 13:17; Is 42:19 (God); Ez 23:40 (Oholah and Oholibah = Samaria and Jerusalem); Hg 1:13 (the messenger of the Lord); Mal 1:1 מַלְאָכִי malā'kî the name Malachi means "my messenger", so God's messenger; 2:7 (Levites are messengers of the Lord); 3:1 (God says: "my messenger" מַלְאָכִי malā'kî and "the angel" or "the messenger of the covenant" וַיְמַלְאֵךְ הַבְּרִית ūmal'āk habbərît).

Messengers מַלְאָכִים mal'ākîm, plural. Often when messengers are sent, the plural is used. It seems that it was more usual to send more than one messenger. Again, when the sender is clear, he is given in brackets.

Gn 32:3.6 (Jacob); Nm 20:14 (Moses); 21:21 (Israel); 22:5 (Balak); 24:12 (Balak); Dt 2:26 (Moses); Jo 6:17 (Israel); 6:25 (Joshua); 7:22 (Joshua); Jgs 6:35.35 (Gideon); 7:24 (Gideon); 9:31 (Zebul); 11:12.13.14 (Jephthah); 11:17.19 (Israel); 1 Sm 6:21 (the men of Beth-shemesh); 11:3.4 (Jabesh); 11:7 (Saul); 11:9.9 (Jabesh); 16:19 (Saul); 19:11.14.15.16.20.20.21.21 (Saul); 23:27; 25:14.42 (David); 2 Sm 2:5 (David); 3:12 (Abner); 3:14 (David); 3:26 (Joab); 5:11 (Hiram king of Tyre); 11:1; 11:4 (David); 11:27 (David).

1 Kgs 20:2.5.9.9 (Ben-hadad king of Aram); 2 Kgs 1:2.3.5.16 (Ahaziah); 7:15 (King of Israel); 14:8 (Amaziah); 16:7 (Ahaz); 17:4 (Hoshea); 19:9.14.23 (Sennacherib king of Assyria); 1 Chr 14:1 (Hiram king of Tyre); 19:2

(David); 19:16 (Aram); 2 Chr 35:21 (Neco king of Egypt); 36:15.16 (God's messengers):

15 The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. 16 But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, until there was no remedy.

Neh 6:3 (Nehemiah); Isa 14:32 (nation); 18:2 (Cush); 30:4 (Judah); 33:7 ("the ambassadors of peace weep bitterly"); 37:9.14 (Assyria's king Sennacherib); Isa 44:26 (God); Jer 27:3; Ezekiel 17:15 (Judah); 23:16 (Oholibah, meaning Jerusalem); 30:9 (God); Nahum 2:13 (Nineveh).

7.3.2 In the New Testament

Word used

The Greek word used for angels / messengers is ἄγγελος *angēlōs*. It is used for somebody sent to perform a certain task or to deliver a certain message. The person sent can be a heavenly angel of God or a human messenger or in a few cases an angel of Satan, a fallen angel. Normally this is recognizable from the context. In the New Testament the word means heavenly angel most of the time. The heavenly angels of God, the human messengers and also the angels of Satan have been created by God.

First 'angel' used for heavenly angels.

Angel of the Lord. Only Matthew and Luke (in Lk and Acts) use the phrase ἄγγελος κυρίου *angēlōs kyriōu* or ὁ ἄγγελος κυρίου *hō angēlōs kyriōu* (with definite article) which resembles the language of the Old Testament and "the angel of the Lord" there (Mt 1:20.24; 2:13.19; 28:2; Lk 1:11; 2:9; Acts 5:19; 8:26; 12:7.23). In the New Testament the angel of the Lord is clearly different from Jesus Christ (see for example Luke 2:9-11 where the angel of the Lord points to the child in the manger).

Tasks and characteristics of angels in the NT

1. God and the angels. There are angels of God (Lk 12:8.9). "There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Lk 15:10). The disciples "will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (Jn 1:51).
2. Jesus and the angels.
 - (a) Because Jesus Christ has control over everything, his own will not be separated from God's love in Christ by anything, also not by angels (Rom 8:38). Jesus confesses his faithful ones before God's angels and denies those who deny him before them (Lk 12:8.9). Those who are denied can have no salvation because the angels will have to collect the elect at the end.
 - (b) The gospel proclaimed by Jesus and the disciples who were trained by him is greater than the law declared by angels (Heb 2:1-4).
 - (c) The angels serve Christ and worship him. They are "his angels". "Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him" (Mt 4:11; cf. Mk 1:13). The devil even tried to tempt Jesus Christ by quoting Ps 91:11-12 pointing out that the angels have special care for the Son of God so he could throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple (Mt 4:6; Lk 4:10). In Gethsemane an angel from heaven appeared to Jesus strengthening him (Lk 22:43). Jesus will come "with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done" (Mt 16:27; par. 25:31). "Let all God's angels worship him" (Heb 1:6).
 - (d) When God the Father said from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." the crowd misinterpreted the voice as thunder or as an angel who has spoken to Jesus (Jn 12:28-29).
 - (e) After his crucifixion and resurrection Jesus appeared triumphant to angels (1 Tm 3:16). Jesus "went into heaven and is at the

right hand of God with angels and authorities and powers subject to him" (1 Pt 3:22). Angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, worship Jesus (Rv 5:11-12). A myriad in Greek is ten thousand, a myriad of a myriad would be 100 million. A thousand of a thousands would be a million. The phrase as it stands here gives the impression of many, many angels (cf. the "myriads of angels" in the heavenly Jerusalem in Heb 12:22).

- (f) Jesus as the unique and divine Son of God is "as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs" (Heb 1:4.5). In comparison to this angels are only created spiritual beings serving him and his chosen ones (Heb 1:7.13).
- (g) The world to come will not be subjected to angels, but to him "who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone" (Heb 2:5.7.9). The salvation Jesus brings as high priest is not for angels, but for the offspring of Abraham (Heb 2:16).
- (h) On judgment day Jesus will send his angels to "gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace" (Mt 13:39-42; cf. 13:49). On that day Jesus also "will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven" (Mk 13:27; par. Mt 24:31).

3. The church and angels.

- (a) Hospitable people sometimes "entertained angels unawares" (Heb 13:2).
- (b) Apostles "have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men" (1 Cor 4:9).
- (c) The work of the grace of God in Christ in the church is so great the angels have the great desire to bend down to watch what

is going on in the church (1 Pt 1:12). The possible invisible presence of angels at the gathering of the church causes Paul to write what he writes in 1 Cor 11:10.

- (d) Angels are "all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation" (Heb 1:14). There can be a connection between certain angels and single believers (The angels of little believing children always see the face of God the Father who is in heaven, Mt 18:10. Acts 12:15: "Peter's" angel).
 - (e) After death angels transport believers to paradise as they carried the poor man to Abraham's side (Lk 16:22).
 - (f) Believers will judge angels (1 Cor 6:3).
 - (g) In Acts 6:15 Stephen's face compared to an angel's face. Though Paul's condition was a trial to the Galatians, they received him "as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus" (Gal 4:14).
4. Angels are sent to deliver God's revelation, word, guidance or help to individual human beings.
- (a) Mose: to call him to guide Israel out of Egypt (Acts 7:30.35.38 pointing to Ex 3).
 - (b) Joseph: to take Mary home as his wife because she is still a virgin and will be the mother of the redeemer (Mt 1:20.24); to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt to save them from Herod (Mt 2:13); to go back to Israel with Mary and Jesus (Mt 2:19).
 - (c) Gabriel appeared to Zechariah: to tell of the birth of John the Baptist, his significance and to give rules about him (Lk 1:11.13.18.19).
 - (d) Gabriel appeared to Mary (Lk 1:26.30.34.35.38; 2:21).
 - (e) The shepherds: to bring good news of a great joy that will be for all the people, that a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, is born for them (Lk 2:9.10.13.15).
 - (f) The women at the tomb: an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, caused an earthquake, rolled back the stone and scared

away the soldier guards to make way for the women and told them that Jesus had risen and will show himself to the disciples in Galilee (Mt 28:2.5); Lk 24:23 (the women "had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive"); Jn 20:12 (two angels asking Mary Magdalene: "Woman, why are you weeping?").

- (g) Cornelius: to send for Peter to hear from him the word of salvation (Acts 10:3.7; 11:13).
 - (h) To free his people from prison: the apostles (Acts 5:19); Peter (Acts 12:7.8.9.10.11).
 - (i) Philip: to "go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza" (Acts 8:26)
 - (j) Paul: to tell him, "God has granted you all those who sail with you" (Acts 27:23).
5. Angels are sent to deliver God's revelation, word, guidance or help to the people of Israel. The law was "delivered by angels" (Acts 7:53) consisting of "living oracles" given by the angel (Acts 7:38) and was "a message declared by angels" (Heb 2:2). The law "was put in place through angels by an intermediary" (Gal 3:19).
 6. They are sent to deliver God's revelation, word, guidance or help to the church of God of Israel and the Gentiles. An angel delivered "Revelation" to John and the other servants of God (Rv 1:1; 22:6).
 7. Angels are sent to punish.
 - (a) Individuals. King Herod (Acts 12:23).
 - (b) The nations. See e.g. the seven trumpet angels (Rv 8:2.6.7.8.10.12.13; 9:1.13.14; 10:7; 11:15) or the the seven angels with the seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God (15:1.6.7.8; 16:1.2.3.4; 16:8.10.12.17; 17:1.7 + 19:9 + 21:9 + 22:8).
 8. Angels in the book of Revelation.

- (a) Single angels mentioned: 1:1; 22:6 (the angel who delivered Revelation to John and the others servants of God); 5:2 (a strong angel); 7:2 (another angel with the seal of the living God); 8:3.4.5 (another angel ... was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne); 10:1.5.8.9.10 (another mighty angel); another angel having great authority called, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!" (18:1); 18:21 (one strong angel); 19:17 (one angel standing in the sun); 20:1 (an angel coming down from heaven); 21:17 (measure of an angel); 22:16 ("I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches.")
- (b) Groups of angels:
- i. Four angels "standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth" (7:1).
 - ii. The seven trumpet angels (8:2.6.7.8.10.12.13; 9:1; 9:13.14; 10:7; 11:15).
 - iii. Four angels of judgment who are bound at the great river Euphrates and are released to kill a third of mankind at the time of the sixth trumpet (9:14-15).
 - iv. Michael and his angels are fighting against the dragon and his angels and defeating them throwing them out of heaven down to the earth (12:7-9).
 - v. Six times "another angel" is mentioned in Rv 14:6-20. The first three are counted (14:6-11). The last three are found in 14:15-20. These two passages are an inclusion enveloping the center piece which is about Jesus Christ and the saints who have faith in him (14:12-14). Another angel with an eternal gospel (14:6); another angel, a second saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great" (8); another angel, a third saying, "If anyone worships the beast ... he also will drink the wine of God's wrath" (14:9-10); another angel came out of the temple, "calling ... to him who sat on the cloud, 'Put in your sickle, and reap...' (14:15); another angel, he too had a sharp sickle (14:17);

another angel, the angel who has authority over the fire, called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth (14:18).

vi. The seven angels with the seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God (15:1.6.7.8; 16:1.2.3.4; 16:8.10.12.17; 17:1.7 + 19:9 + 21:9 + 22:8 (one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls). Is the angel of the waters in 16:5 the bowl angel number 3?

vii. Twelve angels at the gates of the New Jerusalem (21:12).

(c) All angels of God summed up together. They worship Jesus Christ as God and acknowledge his part in salvation (Rv 5:11; 7:11). Jesus will confess the name of the one who conquers before his Father and before his Father's angels (3:5).

9. Some additional information about angels.

(a) Angels are called angels of heaven, from heaven or in heaven (Mt 22:30; 24:36; Mk 12:25; 13:32; Heb 12:22 in the heavenly Jerusalem). There are twelve angels as guards at the gates of the New Jerusalem (Rv 21:12).

(b) Numbers of angels. There are "myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands" (Rv 5:11-12). A myriad in Greek is ten thousand, a myriad of a myriad would be 100 million. A thousand of a thousands would be a million. The phrase as it stands here gives the impression of many, many angels. There are "myriads of angels" in the heavenly Jerusalem in Heb 12:22).

(c) Angels as spirits: "He makes his angels winds" (or "spirits")³ (Heb 1:7). "Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" (Heb 1:14).⁴

3. Ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα

4. οὐχὶ πάντες εἰσὶν λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα εἰς διακονίαν ἀποστελλόμενα διὰ τοὺς μέλλοντας κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν;

- (d) God's angels are holy and chosen. Mk 8:38 (holy); Lk 9:26 (holy); Acts 10:22 (a holy angel); Rv 14:10 (holy); 1 Tm 5:21 (chosen).
- (e) Angels as soldiers, part of God's armies. With the angel who proclaimed the Christmas message to the shepherds was "a multitude of the heavenly host (= army) praising God" (Lk 2:13.15). Michael and his angels are fighting against the dragon and his angels (Rv 12:7-9). "And the armies of heaven ... were following him on white horses" (Rv 19:14). The Father could have sent Jesus "more than twelve legions of angels" (Mt 26:53).
- (f) Angels are mentioned together with other "authorities" (Rom 8:38; 1 Pt 3:22; 2 Pt 2:11).
- (g) God's angels do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against "the glorious ones" before the Lord (2 Pt 2:10-11; probably Satan and those powerful spiritual personalities who are connected with him, cf. Jude 1:8-9)
- (h) The angels have at least one language that can be spoken by those who have the gift of speaking in other tongues (1 Cor 13:1). But because they had nothing similar to the tower of Babylon in their history (Gn 11:1-9), they perhaps have only one language of their own.
- (i) While the Sadducees said "that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit", the Pharisees acknowledged that all. Therefore they acknowledged that it was possible that "a spirit or an angel spoke" to Paul (Acts 23:8-9).
- (j) If an angel from heaven would preach another gospel, he would be accursed (Gal 1:8). There were people in Colossae who judged their fellow believers "insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions" and were "puffed up without reason" in their sensuous minds (Col 2:18).

Secondly 'angel' used for human messengers.

Messenger(s) Mt 11:10 (John the Baptist as God's messenger); Lk 7:27 (John the Baptist as God's messenger); Lk 7:24 (John's messengers); 9:52 (messengers of Jesus); James 2:25 (messengers of Joshua).

The angels of the seven churches Rv 1:20; 2:1.8.12.18; 3:1.7.14.

Thirdly 'angel' used for fallen angels

Fallen angels Mt 25:41 (Satan's angels); 2 Cor 11:14 (Satan disguised as an angel of light); 12:7 (an angel of Satan); 2 Pt 2:4 (God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment); Jude 6 (the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day); Rv 12:7.8 (Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven).

7.4 Gabriel and Michael, Archangels

There are two strong heavenly spiritual personalities mentioned with name in the Old and the New Testaments: Gabriel and Michael.

7.4.1 Gabriel

In the Old Testament

Gabriel (גַּבְרִיֵּאל *gabrî'ēl* 'man of God' or 'strength of God')⁵ is only mentioned in the Old Testament in the book of Daniel in 8:16 and 9:21. In both places his task is to help Daniel understand the vision granted to him. Dn 8:15-16:

5. Gladstone, Hillyer, and al., *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary Part 1*, p. 532.

15 When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it. And behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. 16 And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision."

The vision which Gabriel has to explain to Daniel here is the vision of the ram and the goat. The ram with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia and "the goat is the king of Greece" (8:21).

In the second instance Daniel had read the book of the prophet Jeremiah and wanted to know more about the 70 years and turned to God in prayer, fasting and repentance (9:1-3). God answered him by sending Gabriel and giving him the message of the 70 weeks (9:21-24).

The revelation of God which Gabriel brings or explains to Daniel relates to great world powers in their own time like the kings of Media and Persia and Greece on the one hand and Israel, the people of God with Jerusalem as the center on the other. It also relates to the ultimate fulfillment of all prophecies in the end times.

In the New Testament

In the New Testament Gabriel is only mentioned in the book of Luke bringing the news of the birth of John the Baptist to his father Zechariah and the news of the birth of Jesus the Christ to the virgin Mary. When Zechariah had trouble to believe the good news, Gabriel revealed his identity to underline the truth of his message (Lk 1:18-20).

Again Gabriel's message is related to the fulfillment of prophecies, to God's word being truthful and sure. Therefore he is also sent to Mary as a fulfillment of God's promises to the house of David (Lk 1:26-27).

When Mary asks how it is possible for her as a virgin to give birth to Jesus Christ to be king of Israel, Gabriel again underlines that God's word surely will happen (Lk 1:35-37).

Gabriel seems to be entrusted with "high profile" revelations which are very important for salvation history. According to his messages God rules the nations and world powers in such a way that he will ultimately bring

about the kingdom of God with his Christ at the top ruling Israel and the world for ever.

7.4.2 Michael

In the Old Testament

Michael (מִיכָאֵל *mîkā'ēl* 'who is like God?')⁶ is only mentioned in the Old Testament in the book of Daniel in 10:13,21 and 12:1 which is in the last vision of the book which stretches from 10:1 to 12:13. At that time Daniel was mourning for three weeks before God desiring to understand more of the visions which God had sent to him. His prayer was answered and God sent to him such a strong heavenly personality (10:5-6)) that he lost all his strength and fell down on his face. A comparison with Rv 1:13-15 shows that it is possible that this was Jesus Christ in his pre-incarnate state.

If we accept that Jesus Christ revealed himself to Daniel in his divine power, then it is interesting what he says about himself and about Michael (10:12-13)

Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. 13 The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia,⁷ 14 and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.

Daniel's desire to understand more was granted from the first of the 21 days and Christ would have come then to bring him more understanding, but "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" hindered his coming for three weeks. Only the help from "Michael, one of the chief princes" made his coming now

6. M. Gladstone, N. Hillyer, and et al., *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary Part 2* (Wheaton, Illinois, 1980), p. 997.

7. וְשָׂרָא מַלְכוּת פָּרְס עָמַד לְנִגְדִי עֲשָׂרִים וָאֶחָד יוֹם וַהֲנִיחָהּ מִיכָאֵל אֶחָד הַשָּׂרִים הָרָאשִׁימִים
בָּא לְעֻזְרִנִּי וְאֲנִי נֹתַרְתִּי שָׁם אֶעֱלֶה מֶלֶכִּי פָּרְס:

possible. All this points to spiritual battles going on within the invisible world which have an influence on what happens on earth.

At the time of the vision ("In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia" 10:1) Persia was the dominant world power in that part of the world where the Jews lived. And while Cyrus was the human king of Persia with enormous power, there was also this "prince of the kingdom of Persia" who would withstand the divine Christ for 21 days and would then oppose Michael instead. Michael is also called "prince", but even "one of the chief princes". In the New Testament he is called "archangel" which fits this description here.

In 10:20-11:1 Christ gives more information about himself and Michael: Michael is called "your prince". He is especially related to the people of God, to Israel. Michael and the divine Christ are also companions in battle. In 10:13 and 10:21 Michael helps Christ and in 11:1 Christ helped Michael.

Having delivered his revelation to Daniel, the divine Christ will continue to fight the prince of Persia and after that fight he will confront the prince of Greece. As Greece will supplant Persia as world power (see 8:20-22), we get here a glimpse of the spiritual battles behind the scenes of world history. Salvation history is not only driven by human beings, but by armies of God on the one hand ("Lord of hosts"; cf. Joshua 5:13-15) and other spiritual beings opposing God on the other (cf. Is 24:21; 27:1).

While in 10:13 Michael is only one of the chief princes which are several, in 10:21 he is unique, "there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince." When it comes to spiritual battles and spiritual war, the prince Michael has a key role side by side with the divine Christ.

In the New Testament

In the NT Michael is mentioned twice. In Jude 1:9 we hear of him as an archangel:

But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."

As we know from Daniel Michael is especially Israel's heavenly prince. Therefore it is no surprise that he would be the angel who would contend with the devil about the body of Moses. We see Moses and Elijah in glory on the mount of transfiguration speaking with the transfigured Jesus (Lk 9:30-31). Elijah went alive to heaven as we read in 2 Kgs 2:1-14. That the glorified Moses can talk to Jesus on the mount, presupposes some graceful work of God on his body which the devil was opposed to, but Michael contended successfully for.

In Revelation 12 the dragon who is Satan tried to devour the Christ-child after his birth, but failed to do so. On the contrary the "child was caught up to God and to his throne" (12:5). Consequently a war broke out in heaven (12:7-9):

7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world - he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

When it comes to battle, Michael as archangel seems especially apt to fight the enemies of God. We have seen that in Daniel 10-12 and we see it here. Whenever there is a change in the dominating world power, there is also a kind of spiritual battle in the background, in the invisible world. Within Revelation this war in 12:7-9 prepares the way for a beast rising out of the sea (12:17-13:1):

12:17 Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea. 13:1 And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. 2 And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth.

And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

The four wild beasts representing the four world powers of Daniel 7 are here seen in one beast as we see the four world powers united in Daniel 2 in one great image. The seven heads sum up the complete sequence of world powers since God's people became a separate people (Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Media and Persia, Greece, Rome, the seventh after Rome and this beast of Rv 13 as number eight and a repetition of one of the seven, see Rv 17:7-11). This beast triumphs over everything in the world, it even overcomes the saints. People worship the dragon and the beast saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" (13:4) This rhetorical question expects the answer: "Nobody!"

It is interesting that this whole built-up of Satan-worship and beast-worship is based on lies. The truth is implied in the name of the archangel Michael: "Who is like God?" This rhetorical question expects the answer: "Nobody!" It is of high significance that this Michael with his angels threw Satan and his angels out of heaven in chapter 12. The whole of what Satan, the beast and the other beast (13:11ff) do in chapter 13 is one big bluff, one big lie for a short time performance ending in the final defeat and eternal condemnation of the main actors (Rv 20:10).

7.4.3 Archangels

The New Testament speaks only twice of archangels (ὁ ἀρχάγγελος *hō archangēlōs*), once in Jude 9 which we already have seen talking about the archangel Michael and once in 1 Thes 4:16-17:

16 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.⁸

17 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, and so we will always be with the Lord.

8. ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ, καταβήσεται ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ, καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον

Because what we have here happens at the time of the last trumpet (cf. 1 Cor 15:52), we can say that we have the same action mentioned in Mt 24:30-31:

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30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And 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.

In Matthew Jesus sends his angels to gather the elect at the sound of the trumpet call. Paul adds that there will also be the voice of an archangel heard. If we combine both, we get the information that an archangel will "oversee" or command the work of the angels while they collect God's people from everywhere. The name of the archangel is not mentioned. But if we remember that Michael stands for God's people we can at least assume that it will be his voice.

The sound of the trumpet could be a call to gather God's people for a feast or to gather them for battle (Nm 10:9-10). If we combine this with Rv 19:14 and 17:14, we can assume that it is a call for battle. Then Michael would not only oversee the gathering of God's people from all over the earth, but also their incorporation as a battle force in God's heavenly armies. That would fit his job description as far as we have seen him in action in other places.

In the two places in the New Testament the word archangel is used in the singular. Once it is clearly used for Michael, in the other verse it very well could be Michael again. So according to this, there could be just one archangel. But we have seen in Daniel 10:13 that Michael is called "one of the chief princes"⁹ which is translated in the LXX with εἰς τῶν ἀρχόντων τῶν πρῶτων ἡῖς τὸν ἀρχόντων τὸν πρῶτον "one of the first rulers" which is quite close to the term "archangel". Therefore Daniel 10:13 suggests a plurality of archangels.

Within Jewish tradition there is such a plurality of archangels, "the angels of the presence' who stand before God's throne praising him and interceding for men (Tobit 12:15; Jubilees 2:2; 1 QH 6:13; 1 QSb 4; Testament of Levi 3:5,7; cf. Lk 1:19; Rev. 8:2)."¹⁰ They are presented either as four: Gabriel, Michael, Sariel (Uriel) and Raphael, or as seven: Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Sariel (or Saraqael) and Remiel.

On the backdrop of Jewish tradition Revelation 8:2 could perhaps point to seven archangels:

Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.¹¹

It is interesting that they are mentioned in the context of the prayer of the saints (Rv 8:3-5) which would also agree with Tobit 12:15 and Testament of Levi 3:7.¹²

7.5 Cherubim

In the Old Testament

A cherub (כְּרוּב *kərûḇ*), plural cherubim (כְּרוּבִים *kərûḇîm*) is a heavenly spiritual being found most of the time or always in the presence of God. Perhaps it would not be correct to call them a kind of angels, because angels or messengers are often sent by God somewhere to do something or to convey a message to somebody there, while cherubim simply stay in the presence of God or protect the area of God's presence so that people who are uninvited are not able to come to God's throne.

10. Gladstone, Hillyer, and al., *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary Part 1*, p. 532 article "GABRIEL".

11. 8:2 καὶ εἶδον τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἁγγέλους οἱ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἑστῆκασιν, καὶ ἐδόθησαν αὐτοῖς ἑπτὰ σάλπιγγες.

12. F. E. Gaebelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews, James, 1,2 Peter, 1,2,3 John, Jude, Revelation*, vol. 12, Morris, L. and Burdick, D. W. and Blum, E. A. and Barker, G. W. and Blum, E. A. and Johnson, A. F. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1981), p. 488-489.

1. Cherubim protecting paradise. The first time cherubim are mentioned in the Bible is in Gn 3:24: The cherubim and the sword are placed by God to hinder man to reach paradise and the tree of life in paradise. For Adam and Eve paradise was the place where they first lived and could meet God (Gn 3:8). So even here the cherubim guard a place which was related to the presence of God.
2. Cherubim in the tabernacle and on the ark of the covenant
 - (a) Two cherubim of gold on the two ends of the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant (Ex 25:18.19.20.22; 37:7.8.9; The voice of the Lord spoke "from between the two cherubim" to Moses (Nm 7:89). The Lord of hosts is enthroned on the cherubim of the ark of the covenant representing a heavenly reality on earth (1 Sm 4:4; 2 Sm 6:2; 1 Chr 13:6). So Hezekiah could pray to God and say: 'O Lord the God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth" (2 Kgs 19:15; cf. Is 37:16). Similarly in Ps 80:1 and 99:1).
 - (b) cherubim skillfully worked into the ten curtains of the tabernacle (Ex 26:1; 36:8;;
 - (c) cherubim skillfully worked into veil of the most holy (Ex 26:31; 36:35;
3. Cherubim in the temple of Solomon
 - (a) Two cherubim of olivewood overlaid with gold in the inner sanctuary, each ten cubits high (1 Kgs 6:23-28; 2 Chr 3:10.11.12.13). The priests "brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place in the inner sanctuary ... underneath the wings of the cherubim (1 Kgs 8:6-7; cf. 2 Chr 5:7.8). The idea of "the golden chariot of the cherubim that spread their wings and covered the ark of the covenant of the Lord" in 1 Chr 28:18 can be understood with Keil: "The cherubim, not the ark, are the chariot upon which God enters or is throned; cf. Ps. xviii. 11,

xcix. 1, Ex. xxv. 22."¹³

- (b) engraved figures of cherubim around all the walls of the house, in the inner and outer rooms (1 Kgs 6:29; 2 Chr 3:7).
 - (c) carvings of cherubim on the two doors of the entrance to the inner sanctuary overlaid with gold (1 Kgs 6:32;
 - (d) cherubim worked on the veil between the holy place and the most holy (2 Chr 3:14);
 - (e) carvings of cherubim on the two doors of the entrance to the nave overlaid with gold (1 Kgs 6:35);
 - (f) The ten stands of bronze for the sea of cast metal had panels. And on the panels were lions, oxen, and cherubim (1 Kgs 7:29). "And on the surfaces of its stays and on its panels, he carved cherubim, lions, and palm trees" (1 Kgs 7:36).
4. God riding on a cherub to come and save David (2 Sm 22:11; Ps 18:10; cf. 1 Chr 28:18).
5. Cherubim in the visions of Ezekiel

- (a) The cherubim in the vision of Ezekiel's calling (1:1-3:27) are there not mentioned as cherubim, but later identified as such (see 10:15; cf. 10:20):

And the cherubim mounted up. These were the living creatures that I saw by the Chebar canal.¹⁴

- (b) Cherubim in the rest of the book are found mentioned in these verses: Ez 9:3; 10:1.2.2.3.4.6.7.7.7.8.9.9.14; 10:15.16.16; 10:18.19.20; 11:22; 28:14.16; 41:18.18; 41:18.18.20.25.

First when the cherubim are introduced they are called "living creatures". The word for "living creature" is חַיָּיָה ḥayyāh which is also the

13. C. F. Keil, I & II Kings, I & II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Martin, James <trans>; Taylor, Sophia <trans>; Harper, Andrew <trans> (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 294 under 1 Chr 28:11-19.

14.

וַיֵּרְאוּ הַכְּרוּבִים הֵיאָה הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי בְּנִתְר־כְּכָר:

normal word for an animal. A human being can also be called "a living creature" or "a living being".

The word living creature is used 15 times for the cherubim in Ezekiel. Nine times it is living creatures in the plural (Ez 1:5.13.13; 1:14.15.15.19.19.; 3:13) and six times it is used with the singular, three times in the phrase "for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels"¹⁵ (KJV; Ez 1:20.21.) or "for the spirit of the living creature was in them",¹⁶ also meaning the wheels (KJV; Ez 10:17).

In Ez 1:22 the singular may be deliberate with a real singular meaning (KJV):

And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.¹⁷

Again in Ez 10:15.20 the singular may be deliberate with a real singular meaning (KJV):

15 And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar¹⁸ ... 20 This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims.¹⁹

If the singular in these verses is deliberate, then the idea is perhaps that the four living creatures are so much one that they act like one living creature. Their choreography and their movements are guided by "the spirit of the living creature ... in them", by one spirit making them one. It may well be that the word "cherub" mentioned in Ps 18:10 and 2 Sm 22:11 also designates a "chariot" of cherubim as in 1 Chr 28:18 and that we have to think of something like Ez 1 for those verses as well. In agreement with this it is mentioned in 9:3 that "the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the

15. כִּי רוּחַ הַחַיָּה בְּאִפְנֵימָם:
16. כִּי רוּחַ הַחַיָּה בָּהֶם:
17. וְדַמּוּת עַל-רֹאשֵׁי הַחַיָּה רָקִיעַ כְּעֵין הַקִּרְחַת הַנּוֹרָא נָטוּי עַל-רֹאשֵׁיהֶם מְלֻמָּעָה:
18. וַיֵּלְמּוּ הַכְּרוּבִים הָיָא הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי בְּנִהְר־כְּבָר:
19. הָיָא הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי תַּחַת אֱלֹהֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנִהְר־כְּבָר וְאֵנִי כִי כְרוּבִים הֵמָּה:

cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house" (notice the singular "cherub"; cf. 10:4).

The cherubim had "the likeness of four living creatures".²⁰ Their appearance and what they carry is described thus (1:5-6.10.15.18.22 + 25-28):

... they had a human likeness, 6 but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings ... 10 As for the likeness of their faces, each had a human face. The four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle ... 15 Now as I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them ... 18 And their rims were tall and awesome, and the rims of all four were full of eyes all around ... 22 Over the heads of the living creatures there was the likeness of an expanse, shining like awe-inspiring crystal, spread out above their heads ... 25 And there came a voice from above the expanse over their heads ... 26 And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance. 27 And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him. 28 Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

This is all very significant and a very powerful vision. We have seen above that God is known in the OT as the one who is enthroned above the cherubim and that he could ride on them like on a chariot sitting on a mobile throne

5 וּמִתּוֹכָהּ דְּמִוֵּת אַרְבַּע חַיּוֹת וְזֶה מִרְאִיָּהֶן דְּמִוֵּת אַדָּם לְהִנָּה: 6 וְאַרְבַּעָה פָּנִים לְאַחַת. 20.
וְאַרְבַּע כְּנָפִים לְאַחַת לָהֶם:

as the mobile ark of the covenant also shows us. The ark of the covenant was carried by the sons of Kohath from the tribe of Levi (Nm 4:15). God himself was enthroned over the cherubim of the ark. That was the shadow of the heavenly reality (Ex 25:9,40; Heb 8:5; 10:1).

In his vision Ezekiel now sees something which is closer to the heavenly reality. But still he is very careful in his words, often talking of "the likeness" of something. And at the same time this revelation of God to Ezekiel to make him his prophet corresponds to God's self-revelation through the tabernacle and the temple of Solomon. When God calls Ezekiel to be a prophet, his voice comes from above the cherubim (Ez 1:25) as Moses heard God's voice "from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim" (Nm 7:89).

Ezekiel sees "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (1:28) above the expanse which is another word for heaven (cf. Gn 1:6-8).

The four living creatures carry his throne. The word for "living creature" is חַיָּיָה *ḥayyāh* which is also the normal word for an animal. A human being can also be called "a living creature" or "a living being". The four faces of the living creatures (a face of a human, a lion, an ox and of an eagle) represent the top creatures in their realms. God created Adam in his image and made him ruler of the earth (Gn 1:26-28). The lion was the king of the wild animals, the eagle of the birds in the air and the ox was the strongest animal among the domesticated animals of the Israelites (in India it might have been an elephant). Four as a symbolical number represents the four directions of the earth.

It is remarkable that the lion and the ox are found together with the cherubim as part of the ten stands of bronze for the sea of cast metal in the temple of Solomon (1 Kgs 7:29,36). If we add that the priests who would cleanse themselves with the water of the sea of cast metal were humans, we have lions, oxen, cherubim and humans together in the court of the temple of Solomon with palm trees which all resembles the garden of paradise. First we see the cherubim blocking the way to paradise and the tree of life in Gn 3:22-24. Then we find them in the tabernacle and in the temple of Solomon as part of God's presence among human beings again, as part of paradise regained for Israel, God's chosen people. The fact that "the rims of all four were full of eyes all around" (1:18) helps the cherubim as guards

in the presence of God to be fully alert. No uninvited person will be able to pass them. Ez 10:12 underlines the same truth: "And their whole body, their rims, and their spokes, their wings, and the wheels were full of eyes all around - the wheels that the four of them had" (10:12).

In Ez 1:26-28 the glory of the Lord on his throne above the four living creatures and above the expanse / heaven was seen as "a likeness with a human appearance" and with "the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain".

Ezekiel was called to preach also judgment, but he was called by God who created man in his own image and who here reveals himself in his glory looking like a man and who has made his covenant at the time of Noah with man and all flesh to sustain the world in spite of man's sinfulness (Gn 8:20-9:17).

God loves man. The cherubim not only blocked man from entering paradise and God's presence in Genesis, they here carry God's throne to Ezekiel who is called Son of man in this book all the time and at the end of this book we have a vision of God in the New Jerusalem living with man (Ez 48:35):

And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The Lord is there.²¹

In Ezekiel's vision of the glory of the Lord above the cherubim in 9:1 to 11:25 many things are just the same as in Ez 1. But there are also differences. For example with regard to the four faces of the cherubim we read in 10:14:

And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was a human face, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

In comparison to 1:10 the face of the ox has been dropped and supplanted by "the face of the cherub". Or another possibility is that the face of a cherub is like the face of an ox. Then both visions would still be identical with regard to the faces (cf. 10:22).

21.

וְשֵׁם־הָעִיר מִיּוֹם יְהוָה וְשֵׁמָּה:

Cherubim are spiritual heavenly beings who are only visible for us as far as God grants us to see them in a vision. Perhaps they have the power to appear as they like according to the intention of the vision granted by God. Within Ezekiel they have one set of four faces in 1:10, another set of four faces in 10:14 and only two faces in the carving in 41:18-19.

If we should understand that the face of the ox has been supplanted by the face of a cherub, then the question is what is the place of a cherub in heaven? We have seen that a man, a lion, an eagle and an ox represent top positions in their own realm of creation. What about cherubim? If they are not angels (= messengers), but to be seen separate from them because they never leave the presence of God, what is their position? Maybe they represent the top position among the spiritual heavenly beings. The one fact alone that they have the honor to be permanently in the presence of God, gives us food for thought.

In his vision of a future temple Ezekiel saw a pattern on the walls (41:17-20.25):

And on all the walls all around, inside and outside, was a measured pattern. 18 It was carved of cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between cherub and cherub. Every cherub had two faces: 19 a human face toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm tree on the other side. They were carved on the whole temple all around. 20 From the floor to above the door, cherubim and palm trees were carved; similarly the wall of the nave... 25 And on the doors of the nave were carved cherubim and palm trees, such as were carved on the walls.

Here the carved cherubim have only two faces, one of a human and one of a lion, perhaps because that makes the carving and the pattern easier.

In the lament over the king of Tyre he is compared in his former innocent state to "an anointed guardian cherub" (28:14; cf. 28:16) "in Eden, the garden of God" or "on the holy mountain of God". Here again the idea is that cherubim belong to the presence of God.

In the New Testament

The four living creatures in Revelation have some similarities with the seraphim of Is 6 and others with the cherubim in Ezekiel:

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: 7 the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. 8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" 9 And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever.

The term "four living creatures" (τέσσαρα ζῶα *tëssara zōa*) is taken straight from Ez 1:5. The fact that the four are like a lion, an ox, a man and an eagle reminds us of Ez 1:10, but the difference is that in Ezekiel everyone of the four had the four faces, but here the four individual living creatures are one like a lion, the second like an ox, the third with the face of a man, and the fourth like an eagle in flight. The face is only mentioned with the human face. The others are likened to the whole animal.

That they are "full of eyes in front and behind" can be compared to Ez 1:18 and 10:12. In Ezekiel they have four wings each (Ez 1:6; 10:21), but here in Revelation they have six wings (Rv 4:8) like the seraphim in Is 6:2. The "Holy, holy, holy ..." is also taken from Is 6:3.

When the four living creatures praise God as holy, the 24 elders fall down before God and praise him (Rv 4:9-10). This connection between the four living creatures and the 24 elders is also seen further down in the book. They worship Jesus Christ together (5:6.8.11.14) and God the Father in 19:4 as here in 4:6-9. They are also seen as next to the throne of God together in 7:11 and 14:3.

The powerful position of the four living creatures in heaven is also underlined by the fact that they told the four riders on the four horses to start their race when the lamb opened the first four seals (Rv 6:1.3.5.6.7) and one of them "gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God" (15:7).

7.6 Seraphim

In the Old Testament

The word used in Is 6:2.6 שֶׁרָפִיִּם śērāpîm is only used here for a spiritual flying heavenly being. The same Hebrew word is used for "fiery" or poisonous serpents in Nm 21:6.8 and Dt 8:15 and for a flying serpent in Is 14:29 and 30:6. Often in Bible translations the word seraphim is not translated, but only transcribed as in English. The related verb śāraṭ means to burn. The only place to get information about the seraphim is Is 6:2-7:

2 Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!"

4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

The seraphim cover their face not to see God directly. They cover their feet to cover the part of the body which might be related to shame (Ex 20:26). Their voice is so powerful that the temple or palace of God is shaken by it and the house filled with smoke. Their message is that God almighty, the

Lord of his heavenly armies, is very, very, very holy. This implies ethical perfection (Lv 19:1-37).

At the same time God's dominion covers the whole of heaven (Lord of hosts = Lord of the heavenly armies) and earth ("the whole earth is full of his glory"). God is not only a local god or a local deity. He rules supreme. There is no competition for Him.

The seraphim are ethical beings who proclaim the ethical supremacy of God and his unlimited power over everything. Isaiah feels his sin and impurity and is sure that he has to die.

But one saraph acts as a priest by taking a burning coal from the altar, touching his mouth and cleansing him from his sins. The power of atonement comes from the altar where blood has been shed. Later Isaiah would reveal the source of atonement as being the blood of Christ (Is 52:13-53:12).

In the New Testament

The four living creatures in Revelation have some similarities with the seraphim of Is 6 and others with the cherubim in Ezekiel. They have the six wings in common with the seraphim (Is 6:2; Rv 4:8) and what they say resembles the first half of what the seraphim say in Is 6:3.²²

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!²³

The "Holy, holy, holy" is identical here and there. "The Lord of hosts" in Isaiah is "the Lord God Almighty" here: Because of the power of his heavenly armies nothing can stop God. He is ruling everywhere. "Who was and is and is to come" is a typical Revelation translation of the name of God which God revealed to Moses in Ex 3:14 (compare the LXX translation with Rv 1:4.8).

22.

קְדוֹשׁ | קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת מְלֹא כָּל־הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ:

23. Ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος. The LXX has for Is 6:3 ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος σαβαωθ πληρης πασα η γη της δοξης αυτου

Because of the way that Revelation four combines elements of the OT cherubim with other elements of the seraphim we think that it is possible that the **סְרָפִיִּם** *śērāpîm* of Is 6:2-7 "are another form of the cherubim".²⁴

7.7 Satan

7.7.1 In the Old Testament

Word used. The word "Satan" **שָׂטָן** *śāṭān* means 1. 'adversary' in the Old Testament, and 2. especially 'Satan'.²⁵

It can denote a human adversary: David for the philistines (1 Sm 29:4); the sons of Zeruiah for David, 2 Sm 19:22. At the time of 1 Kgs 5:4 there was "neither adversary nor misfortune" for Solomon. But after his unfaithfulness towards the Lord, "the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite" (1 Kgs 11:14) and "God also raised up as an adversary to him, Rezon the son of Eliada (1 Kgs 11:23.25). David requested from God as punishment for his wicked enemy that God may "appoint a wicked man against him" and "let an accuser stand at his right hand" (Ps 109:6).

It can also be a heavenly angel appointed by God to be an adversary for somebody as in the case of Balaam (Nm 22:22.32):

22 But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him ... 32 And the angel of the Lord said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me.

In the rest of the places where 'Satan' is used, the word denotes a spiritual non-human personality who is an adversary to Job (1:6.7.8.9.12; 2:1.2.3.4.6.7), to Israel and David (1 Chr 21:1) and to the high priest Joshua (Zec 3:1.2).

24. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 501.

25. *ibid.*, p. 966.

In the book of Job "the sons of God" gathered in God's presence who seem to be heavenly spiritual personalities (Gn 6:2.4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Ps 82:1.6) and Satan came among them (1:6; 2:1). The Lord asked Satan whether he had also a look at God's "servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" (1:8). Satan accused Job of not fearing God for God's own sake, but for his personal profit: "But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face" (1:11). The Lord then allowed Satan to touch everything what Job had, but not touch Job himself.

When Job consequently lost everything he had, "Job did not sin or charge God with wrong" (1:22). On another day when the sons of God came together, the Lord again asked whether Satan had a look at Job who still feared God and turned away from evil and held fast his integrity (2:3). Satan answered, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face" (2:4-5). In answer to this accusation, the Lord permitted Satan to let Job become ill, but not to kill him (2:6).

These two encounters of the Lord with Satan set the stage for the rest of the book of Job, during which Job suffers a lot, has a deep desire that God may explain his difficult situation, comes almost to his breaking point, but finally encounters God in a new and deeper way and is fully restored by God's mercy. Satan does not enter the stage again after chapter 2. God wins in the end, and Job wins.

In the book of Job Satan is the adversary of Job and in a way also of God. Because Job is an exemplary human being, Satan is also the adversary of the whole of the human race and of God as the creator and redeemer of the human race. At the same time Satan has access to God, and the Lord speaks to him. In a way the initiative of the drama of the book of Job lies with the Lord who points out Job to Satan.

In 1 Chr 21:1 Satan targets Israel and David by inciting David to number Israel. We learn from 2 Sm 24:1 that "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, 'Go, number Israel and Judah.'" Again the picture which we get is that Satan is not a kind of

counter-deity, but a creature of God under the full control and jurisdiction of God Almighty. In consequence of the sin of David, "the Lord sent a pestilence on Israel, and 70,000 men of Israel fell" (1 Chr 21:14).

But when David humbled himself and asked God to spare the people and kill him who had sinned, God had mercy on him and on Israel and told David through the prophet Gad "that David should go up and raise an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite" (1 Chr 21:18). And (21:26-27):

David built there an altar to the Lord and presented burnt offerings and peace offerings and called on the Lord, and the Lord answered him with fire from heaven upon the altar of burnt offering. 27 Then the Lord commanded the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath.

God forgave David's sin, stopped the plague and even showed him the place of the future temple. God used Satan to initiate the crisis, but afterwards God's grace gave Israel more than before the crisis. This is very similar to the book of Job.

In Zec 3:1-3 Satan targets the high priest Joshua and thereby the whole spiritual structure of restored Judah insofar as it had returned from the captivity in Babylon:

1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. 2 And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" 3 Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments.

In this vision of the prophet Zechariah the filthy garments of Joshua are related to his sins. Joshua's time in the Babylonian captivity was not a sinless time. He is like a burning piece of wood which has been "plucked from the fire" and so saved from being totally consumed. But the traces of his past are clearly visible. Satan can rightly accuse him. He really sinned. But

again the Lord wins "who has chosen Jerusalem" (3:2). Because of God's love for Jerusalem, the poor and downtrodden Jerusalem, the sins of the high priest Joshua are forgiven, he is cleansed and his calling and his office as high priest are affirmed. Satan is defeated and left to be rebuked by the Lord.

Why is this possible? God brings a future servant and a future salvation of which Joshua and his fellows are only a sign (3:8-9):

Behold, I will bring my servant the Branch. 9 For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day.

God's servant (Is 42:1-12; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12), the righteous Branch of the family of David (Jer 23:5-6; 33:15-16) shall come and solve the problem of sin on one day for ever by his death at the cross (Is 53:4-6; Zec 9:9-11; 12:10; 13:7). This affirms the election of Israel (Is 49:6) and of Jerusalem (Is 2:1-5; 11:10) and defeats Satan for ever. Satan the "accuser" has lost his job when sins are forgiven and people are clothed with the righteousness of God for free as Joshua is clothed here "with pure vestments". We shall see in the New Testament that the blood of Christ is the main means to destroy Satan's hold on mankind.

How can we understand Is 14:3-23 and Ez 28:11-19? Within church history these two sections or parts of them (Is 14:12-14; Ez 28:12-15) have been used to explain how Satan has fallen into sin. One famous example is Augustine in his "City of God" (XI,15):²⁶

As for what John says about the devil, "The devil sinneth from the beginning" they who suppose it is meant hereby that the

26. Philip Schaff, NPNF1-02. St. Augustin's City of God and Christian Doctrine, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1890), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.html>, p. 308. This is later taken up by Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (CCEL), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.html>, p. 421, TREATISE ON THE ANGELS, Question 64, Article 5.

devil was made with a sinful nature, misunderstand it; for if sin be natural, it is not sin at all. And how do they answer the prophetic proofs, - either what Isaiah says when he represents the devil under the person of the king of Babylon, "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" or what Ezekiel says, "Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering," where it is meant that he was some time without sin; for a little after it is still more explicitly said, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways?"

The problem with the use of these two sections is that they are about two kings, the king of Babylon (Is 14:4) and the king of Tyre (Ez 28:11) and not about Satan in the first instance. Someone could perhaps argue that as Satan is the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning (Jn 8:44), so all liars and murderers are his children. And if the king of Babylon and the king of Tyre are judged by God because of their sins, it is really the nature of the devil in their lives which is condemned. So Isaiah and Ezekiel really speak about the nature of the devil reflected in the lives of those two kings.

But still the fact remains that the text speaks of those two kings and does not mention Satan. Or to put it in another way: If God wanted to tell us about how Satan had fallen into sin, he could have revealed it more clearly and with the name of Satan given. Perhaps this is an opportunity to refrain and do not know too much where Scripture seems to be silent (Dt 29:29).

By the way the name "Lucifer" which is often used for Satan is taken from the Latin translation of Is 14:12 (KJV): "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" Lucifer means "one who carries light" or "O Day Star" (ESV). In Is 14:12 it is really used for the king of Babylon who has fallen from being a world ruler feared by all to a mere dead and weakened human being in Sheol in afterlife.

7.7.2 In the New Testament

In comparison to the Old Testament the personality of the devil or Satan is much more referred to in the New Testament under different names or titles.

Satan the Hebrew word which we know from the OT to mean "adversary" is also used as a name transcribed into Greek ὁ Σατανᾶς *hō Satanas*. The adversary can be an adversary in court who accuses his opponents with false or with correct accusations. Satan is as an adversary also the accuser (see below).

1. Satan as opponent of Jesus Christ who triumphs over Satan. Satan as dragon tried to devour the Christ-child at birth (Rv 12:4.9). Jesus was "in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan" (Mk 1:13). Satan offered Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" if Jesus would worship him (Mt 4:8-10). But Jesus tells him to go away with Dt 6:13.

Because Jesus had power to cast out demons, his enemies claimed that Jesus worked through Beelzebul, the prince of demons. Jesus explained to them that if Satan would drive out Satan, then his kingdom would be near its end (Mt 12:26; Mk 3:23.26; Lk 11:18). Jesus can drive out demons because he has bound Satan first (Mt 12:28-29; Mk 3:27; Lk 11:22). Jesus recognized that Satan was at work in Simon Peter when Peter denied the future passion and death of Jesus (Mt 16:23; Mk 8:33).

2. In Christ the church overcomes Satan. "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom 16:20; cf. Gn 3:15). A married couple should "not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Cor 7:5). We should forgive each other "in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs" (2 Cor 2:11).
3. The use of Satan in church discipline. The church can deliver a convicted, but unrepentant sinner "to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (1 Cor 5:5) which seems to imply that Satan gets the permission to bring some kind of illness or accident over this person resulting in the death of the body but that somehow this person comes to repentance and

thus his spirit is saved at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hymenaeus and Alexander have rejected faith and a good conscience and so have made shipwreck of their faith, whom Paul has "handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Tm 1:20).

4. Satan's work among the disciples of Jesus. Peter's rejection of the cross of Jesus was Satan's work (Mt 16:23; Mk 8:33). "Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve" (Lk 22:3). Jesus tells Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Lk 22:31-32). After Jesus gave Judas a morsel of bread, "Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, 'What you are going to do, do quickly.'" (Jn 13:27).

Satan had filled the heart of Ananias "to lie to the Holy Spirit" and to keep back for himself "part of the proceeds of the land" (Acts 5:3). Paul wanted to visit the Thessalonians, but "Satan hindered" him (1 Thes 2:18). Paul said in 2 Cor 12:7 that because of his great experience of divine revelations, "there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." In the process of the selection for which widows should be supported by the church's collected money, Paul advises "younger widows" to "marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. For some have already strayed after Satan" (1 Tm 5:14-15).

In Thyatira "that woman Jezebel" was tolerated by the leadership of the church who called herself 'a prophetess' and was 'teaching and seducing the servants' of Jesus 'to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols'. The people who accepted her teaching claimed that they "have ... learned ... the deep things of Satan" (Rv 2:20,24).

5. Satan's work among ordinary people. Satan tries to hinder people to have faith and become saved. If somebody hears the gospel, but "does not understand it" (Mt 13:19), "Satan immediately comes and

takes away the word that is sown in them (Mk 4:15). Jesus sent Paul to the Gentiles "to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:18)²⁷ which implies that Gentiles who have not yet come to Jesus are still under the dark authority of Satan.

To deceive people "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14). In the last days "the coming of the lawless one" will happen "by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved" (2 Thes 2:9). Rv 2:9 speaks of the "slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan" (similar Rv 3:9). Rv 2:13 states that at that time "Satan's throne" was in Pergamum.

Illness can be caused by Satan and the healing is seen as a liberation from the pain caused by Satan (Lk 13:16).

6. God's judgment of Satan. In a vision Jesus "saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Lk 10:18). Satan is bound for thousand years in the abyss (Rv 20:2).

The devil. This word ὁ διάβολος hō diabōlōs is the normal Greek translation of the Hebrew word "Satan" שָׂטָן śāṭān in the LXX as far as the adversary of God and his people is meant. It means "accuser, Devil"²⁸

1. The devil as opponent of Jesus Christ who triumphs over the devil. "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Mt 4:1; par Lk 4:1-2). After Jesus had fasted "forty days and forty nights" he really became hungry and the devil said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread" (Lk

27. ἀνοίξει ὁφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν, τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι ἀπὸ σκοτοῦς εἰς φῶς καὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ Σατανᾶ ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, τοῦ λαβεῖν αὐτοὺς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ κληροῦν ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις πίστει τῇ εἰς ἐμέ.

28. Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *An Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome, 1981), p. 7 under Mt 4:1.

4:3; par Mt 4:3). The devil took Jesus "to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple" and encouraged him to throw himself down (Mt 4:5; par Lk 4:9) and "to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" promising to give all that to Jesus if he worships the devil (Mt 4:8; par Lk 4:5-7), but Jesus overcame him with Dt 6:13.16 and 8:3 and the devil left him (Mt 4:11; Lk 4:13).

The devil is the enemy of Jesus (Mt 13:37-39). Illness can be an influence of the devil and accordingly when Jesus healed people, he liberated them from this influence (Acts 10:38). Jesus himself partook of flesh and blood, "that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery" (Heb 2:14).

"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8).

2. In Christ the church overcomes the devil. By being "strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might" and putting "on the whole armor of God" believers are "able to stand against the schemes of the devil" and they wrestle successfully "against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:10-12). Believers overcome the devil "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" while not loving their lives even unto death (Rv 12:10-11).

If a servant of the Lord corrects "his opponents with gentleness", then "God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will" (2 Tm 2:26). Older women in the church "are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine" (Tit 2:3).

If believers submit themselves to God and resist the devil, and he will flee from them (Jas 4:7). In times of persecution the adversary

of Christians, "the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" and Christians should resist him, firm in their faith, "knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world" (1 Pt 5:8-9). The devil can cause persecution and cause some Christians to be thrown into prison, if God permits this. This is a test of believers and gives them an opportunity to be faithful to God and be crowned for this (Rv 2:10).

3. The devil's work among the disciples of Jesus. He made Judas "a devil" (Jn 6:70) and put it into his heart to betray Jesus (Jn 13:2). By remaining angry with somebody and not willing to forgive and for reconciliation, believers can give "opportunity to the devil" (Eph 4:26-27).

An overseer in church "must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil". "He must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil" (1 Tm 3:6.7). Female deacons "must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things" (1 Tm 3:11) whereby the word for slanderer is *hō diabōlōs* in the plural: If they were slanderers or accusers they would be in this point similar to the devil.

4. The devil has a certain "glory" and belongs to "the glorious ones" of Jude 1:8 as 1:9 shows: "But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you.' (Jude 1:8-9; cf. 2 Pt 2:10-11).
5. The devil has angels of his own (Mt 25:41; Rv 12:9).
6. The devil has human beings who belong to him and are of his kind, his children. "The ones along the path are those who have heard. Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved" (Lk 8:12).

Judas, one of the twelve was "a devil" (Jn 6:70). The devil put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, to betray Jesus (Jn 13:2) Murderers and liars are children of the devil who was a murderer of human beings from the beginning and is the father of lies (Jn 8:44).

Elymas the magician was a "son of the devil" an "enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy" (Acts 13:10). As the devil is an accuser or slanderer "in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be ... slanderous" (again *hō diabōlōs* in the plural). The tendency of the devil to accuse and slander will be shared by a great part of mankind in the last days (2 Tm 3:3).

"Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8; cf. 3:10).

7. God's judgment of the devil. The devil and his angels are thrown out of heaven and down to the earth in Rv 12:9.

As Eph 2:2 calls him "the prince of the power of the air" (which might be understood as the first heaven, in contrast to the third heaven of paradise and the New Jerusalem, see 2 Cor 12:2-3) and Eph 6:12 places the spiritual enemies of the church "the rulers ... the authorities ... the cosmic powers over this present darkness ... the spiritual forces of evil" *expressis verbis* "in the heavenly places" the time of the devil and his angels to be totally thrown out of heaven seems to be still a future one, even if he has been "thrown out" of a certain area according to John 12:31 and destroyed according to Heb 2:14 and been disarmed with his army according to Col 2:15).

That the devil is thrown out of heaven, results in joy for heaven and those who live in heaven, but also in a woe to the earth and sea, "for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short" (Rv 12:12).

Then the devil is bound and thrown into the abyss for thousand years (Rv 20:2). Having been freed he rebels again and is thrown "into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and

they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rv 20:10). The cursed of mankind go into the fire which was originally "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41).

Beelzebul. Scribes from Jerusalem, Pharisees, accused Jesus to have Beelzebul and to cast out demons by this "ruler of demons" (Mk 3:22; Mt 12:24,27; Lk 11:15,18,19; cf. Mt 9:34). Jesus warns his disciples that as people have called Jesus Beelzebul, they will also do with his disciples (Mt 10:25).²⁹

The great dragon. The great red dragon (ὁ δράκων ὁ drakōn) had seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems (Rv 12:3). That "his tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth" (12:4) could point to the angels of the devil who fell because of his influence.³⁰ He wanted to murder the Christ-child, but failed in this.

Michael and his angels fought the dragon and his angels and threw them for ever out of heaven and down to earth (12:7,9). Finding himself on earth the dragon pursued the woman who had given birth to the Christ-child, but she was protected (Rv 12:13-16). The woman seems to be representing Israel as the people of God (Cf. Rv 12:1 with Gn 37:9-10). Having failed to kill the child and the woman, the dragon became furious "and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Rv 12:17). The motif of Rv 12 seems to be taken from Gn 3:15: The dragon or snake with his offspring versus the woman and her offspring.

The "beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads" (13:1) is like a copy of the dragon formed in his image (cf. 12:3). "To it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority" with

29. According to Walter Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Berlin, 1971), p. 275, Beelzebul goes back to the "Lord of the flies" "Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron" in 2 Kgs 1:2,3,6,16.

30. So with Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Q 63, Article 9, p. 424.

the consequence that the people of the earth worshiped the dragon and the beast thinking them invincible (Rv 13:2.4) especially because one of the beasts seven heads "seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed" imitating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the lamb (compare 13:3 with 5:6).

Then a second beast joined them "rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon" (Rv 13:11). This false prophet looked "like a lamb" imitating again Jesus Christ, but in reality he spoke like a dragon making the Satanic triad complete. This triad causes a demonic revival intoxicating the governments of all nations to fight God himself in the battle of Armageddon (Rv 16:13-14.16).

After this battle "the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan" is seized and bound for a thousand years (Rv 20:2). After the thousand years he "was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rv 20:10).

Many visions in Revelation have an OT background. If we look for relevant sections in the OT we find such sections as Ez 29:3 where God says, "Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lies in the midst of his streams, that says, 'My Nile is my own; I made it for myself.'" (compare also or Ez 32:2). According to our understanding of Rv 17:9-10 six of the seven heads of the beast are the kings of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. So the idea of the king of Egypt as a dragon fits this picture.

But there is another important OT parallel in Is 27:1:³¹

In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.³²

31. LXX: τη ημερα εκεινη επαξει ο θεος την μαχαिरαν την αγιαν και την μεγαλην και την ισχυραν επι τον δρακοντα οφιν φευγοντα επι τον δρακοντα οφιν σκολιον και ανελει τον δρακοντα

32. בָּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִפְקֹד יְהוָה בְּחַרְבּוֹ הַקָּשָׁה וְהַגְדֹּלָה וְהַחֲזָקָה עַל לִוְיָתָן נָחֵשׁ בָּרוּחַ וְעַל לִוְיָתָן נָחֵשׁ עֲקָלָתוֹן וְהָרַג אֶת־הַתַּנִּין אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּם:

If we combine God's action against the dragon here with God's judgment at the time of the end of the earth in Is 24:19-22 we get a very striking parallel to the history of "the great dragon" in Revelation:

The earth is utterly broken, the earth is split apart,
the earth is violently shaken.
The earth staggers like a drunken man; it sways like a hut;
its transgression lies heavy upon it, and it falls,
and will not rise again.
On that day the Lord will punish the host of heaven, in heaven,
and the kings of the earth, on the earth.
They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit;
they will be shut up in a prison,
and after many days they will be punished.

The "pit" as prison here corresponds to the abyss of Rv 20:1 and the "many days" the prisoners are in prison to the the thousand years of Rv 20:2.3.4.5.6.7.

The ancient serpent of Rv 12:9.14.15; 20:2 connects the agency of the dragon and Satan with the work of the serpent in Gn 3:1-15. We have seen that Rv 12:1-17 can especially be understood on the backdrop of Gn 3:15 (cf. Rom 16:20; Lk 10:17-20).

The father of lies. The devil "is a liar and the father of lies" (Jn 8:44). As such he is the the deceiver of the whole world (Rv 12:9; 20:3.8.10). All liars are like children of their father the devil (Jn 8:44).

The accuser of our brothers. We have seen that the name "Satan" comes from the Hebrew and means an adversary, and can also denote an accuser in court. The same is true for the Greek word for "devil". After Satan is thrown out of heaven a voice proclaims in Rv 12:10-11 that Satan has no longer access to the presence of God to accuse anybody (KJV):

Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and

by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

The tempter. In Mt 4:3 the devil is called "the tempter" when he starts his temptation of Jesus. When the devil tests or tempts somebody, he wants him to fail. When God tempts somebody, he wants him to pass. The devil is a tester with evil intention. He looks for the weak spots in somebodies life to bring him to fall.

Having no news about the Thessalonians, Paul could bear it no longer and sent Timothy to learn about their faith, "for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain" (1 Thes 3:5). But Paul received good news from Timothy.

Paul advised married couples not to deprive one another, "except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Cor 7:5).

The evil one.

1. The evil one influences individual people and the whole world to be evil like him.
 - (a) If people do not speak the truth, if their "yes" is not a "yes" and their "no" is not a "no", but if they are lying, they do it under the guidance of the evil one (Mt 5:37).
 - (b) The evil one fights the influence of the word of God by taking it away from those who hear it without understanding (Mt 13:19).
 - (c) As Jesus, the Son of Man, sows the seed of the children of his kingdom into the field of this world, so the evil one sows the weeds as his own children among them to generate confusion.
 - (d) Cain is counted by John as one 'who was of the evil one and murdered his brother'. And why? 'Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous' (1 Jn 3:12).
 - (e) John testifies, "We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 Jn 5:19).

2. God protects and saves his own from the evil one so that they can overcome him.
 - (a) The Lord's faithfulness implies that he "will establish you and guard you against the evil one" (2 Thes 3:3).
 - (b) The request not to lead us into temptation goes hand in hand with the request to deliver us from the evil one (Mt 6:13).
 - (c) Jesus did not ask the Father to take his disciples out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one while they live in this world (Jn 17:15).
 - (d) The "shield of faith" helps disciples to "extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one" (Eph 6:16).
 - (e) John writes to young men who 'have overcome the evil one', who 'are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one' (1 Jn 2:13.14).
 - (f) "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." (1 Jn 5:18.19).

The enemy.

1. As Jesus, the Son of Man, sows the seed of the children of his kingdom into the field of this world, so the devil as his enemy sows the weeds as his own children among them to generate confusion (Mt 13:25.28.39).
2. In fulfillment of Ps 110:1 Jesus now sits at the right hand of God the Father and waits that the Father will put his enemies under his feet, the devil included, and as the last enemy death at the time of the resurrection (Mt 22:44; Mk 12:36; Lk 20:43; Acts 2:35; 1 Cor 15:25.26; Heb 1:13; 10:13).

3. Jesus told his disciples, "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you" (Lk 10:19).

The god of this world. It is probable that Paul is speaking of Satan in 2 Cor 4:3-4:

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.³³

If this assumption is correct, then the devil uses his influence on religions, philosophies, ideologies and the "Zeitgeist" to blind unbelievers so that they do not come to Jesus Christ for light and salvation.

The ruler of this world. In Jn 12:31-33 Jesus explains that his death implies God's "judgment of this world", that is that "the ruler of this world"³⁴ is cast out and thus the way is cleared that Jesus "will draw all people" to himself. In the further development of the passion narrative Jesus said that he could "no longer talk much" with the disciples, "for the ruler of this world" was coming (Jn 14:30).³⁵ He had no claim on Jesus, but Jesus would do exactly as the Father had commanded him, even to die as an atonement for the sins of the world (Jn 1:29).

One work of the Holy Spirit is (Jn 16:8-11) that

he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe

33. ἐν οἷς ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάζειν τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ.

34. νῦν κρίσις ἐστὶν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, νῦν ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἐκβληθήσεται ἔξω•

35. οὐκέτι πολλὰ λαλήσω μεθ' ὑμῶν, ἔρχεται γὰρ ὁ τοῦ κόσμου ἄρχων• καὶ ἐν ἐμοὶ οὐκ ἔχει οὐδέν

in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.³⁶

In all three places where this phrase is used, Jesus is dominant and the "ruler of this world" is overcome by Jesus. He tries to, but cannot defeat Jesus. He loses his ground and is consequently judged and defeated which opens the door for world missions and people of the world entering the flock of Jesus (Jn 10:16; 12:20-24).

The prince of the power of the air. In Eph 2:1-3 Paul speaks of the sinners of the whole world who are influenced and guided by a spirit who has his dominion in the air:

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience³⁷ - 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Seeing the whole testimony of the New Testament about the devil and consulting Eph 6:10-12 we can identify this evil spiritual personality with the devil. He and the "cosmic powers over this present darkness" which are related to him, "the spiritual forces of evil" have their place nowadays as in the days of Paul "in the air" or "in the heavenly places". From here this evil and powerful spirit guides mankind in its rebellion against God and his love. And from here the evil one attacks believers with his flaming darts (Eph 6:16).

We do not have to assume that they have access to the heavenly city which according to Rv 21:12-22:5 is well fortified. And according to Jn

36. περὶ δὲ κρίσεως, ὅτι ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου κέκριται.

37. ἐν αἷς ποτε περιπατήσατε κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος, τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ νῦν ἐνεργοῦντος ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς τῆς ἀπειθείας•

12:31 and 16:11 the glorification of the Son in crucifixion, resurrection and ascension triggered that the "the ruler of this world" was judged and cast out of a certain area. We may understand that this was the New Jerusalem, God's city in heaven with the throne presence of God, banning the accuser from God's presence (cf. Col 2:15; Heb 2:14-15; Rv 21:27; 22:3; Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22-24).

The king of a dark kingdom or of a dark area of authority. Jesus speaks of the kingdom of Satan (Mt 12:26; Lk 11:18) as opposed to the kingdom of God (Mt 12:28; Lk 11:20). Speaking to Jesus the devil claims to have the authority over the kingdoms of the world and all their glory and to be able to give it all to Jesus, if Jesus would worship the devil (Lk 4:5-7; Mt 4:8-9). Jesus answered with Dt 6:13 and so defeated the devil (Mt 4:10; Lk 4:8).

Paul speaks in Col 1:13 of God the Father who "has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son."³⁸ This domain of darkness or dark area of authority stands in contrast to the kingdom of the beloved Son of God which belongs to the light (Col 1:12).

According to Eph 6:12 believers have to wrestle "against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" which affirms the idea of a dark kingdom or of dark forces of evil government.

We have seen that in the New Testament there are many names or titles for Satan or the devil which show him to be the evil spiritual leader of a whole system of wickedness with his own angels, with powerful forces in the heavenly places or in the air exercising an enormous influence on mankind as far as men prefer to stay in a state of disobedience and rebellion towards their creator. Often the word "world" is used to denote this system of rebellion toward the Creator (e.g. Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 15:18; Eph 6:12) or the word "this age" (1 Cor 2:8; Eph 2:2).

38. ὃς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκούτου καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ

7.8 Other words for spiritual authorities.

In addition to the devil or Satan as the leader of the evil system of rebellion toward God the Creator, there are other words used which point to spiritual forces which are part of Satan's kingdom or area of authority. We do not have much detailed information about these spiritual forces, therefore it is not necessary for us to go into details. Here is a table to give an overview over different words used.

thrōnōi	kyriōtēēs	angēloi	archai	ēxousiai	dynamēis	kōsmōkratōrēs	pnēumatika tēs pōnērias	dōxai
θρόνοι	κυριότηες	ἄγγελοι	ἀρχαὶ	ἐξουσίαι	δυνάμεις	κοσμοκράτορες	πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας	δόξαι
thrones	dominions	angels	rulers	authorities	powers	world-rulers	spiritual evil forces	glorious ones
	Eph 1:21	Rom 8:38	Rom 8:38 Eph 1:21 Eph 3:10	Eph 1:21 Eph 3:10 Eph 6:12 Col 1:16	Rom 8:38 Eph 1:21	Eph 6:12	Eph 6:12	
Col 1:16	Col 1:16		Col 1:16 Col 2:15	Col 2:15 1 Pt 3:22	1 Pt 3:22			
	2 Pt 2:10f Jude 1:8-9	1 Pt 3:22						2 Pt 2:10f Jude 1:8-9

7.9 Demons and Unclean Spirits

7.9.1 In the Old Testament

The LXX translates the following Hebrew words with the Greek word for demon.³⁹

Words used

שֵׂדִי šēḏī, pl. שְׂדִיִּים šēḏîm. n. m., demon.⁴⁰ Moses said in his song (Dt 32:17), "They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded."⁴¹ Psalm 106:37-38 speaks of human sacrifices to the demons:

37 They sacrificed their sons
and their daughters to the demons;
38 they poured out innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and daughters,
whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan,
and the land was polluted with blood.

שָׂעִיר sā'îr, pl. שְׂעִירִים sā'îrîm. , n.m. satyr, demon (with he-goat's form, or feet).⁴² In Isaiah 13:21 we read about the devastated place of Babylon, "But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there" (KJV).⁴³ Similarly we learn about the devastated country of Edom in Is 34:14, "The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of

39. The LXX also uses the Greek word for demon to translate Ps 91:6 and Is 65:3. But there it is not quite clear, why that was done.

40. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 993f.

41. יִזְבְּחוּ לַשְׂדִּים לֹא אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים לֹא יִדְעוּם חֲדָשִׁים מִקֶּרֶב בָּאוּ לֹא שְׂעִרִים אֲבֹתֵיהֶם:

42. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 972.

43. וְרִבְצוּ-שָׁם צִיִּים וּמִלְאוּ בְתֵיהֶם אֲחִים וְשָׁכְנוּ שָׁם בְּנוֹת יַעֲזָה וְשְׂעִירִים יִדְקְדוּ-שָׁם:

the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest."⁴⁴

In Lv 17:3-4 there is a rule for sacrificing animals:

3 If any one of the house of Israel kills an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or kills it outside the camp, 4 and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it as a gift to the Lord in front of the tabernacle of the Lord, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood, and that man shall be cut off from among his people.

The purpose of this rule is stated in 17:7:

So they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to goat demons, after whom they whore. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.

King Jeroboam of Northern Israel brought many changes (2 Chr 11:14-15 KJV):

14 For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the Lord: 15 And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made.⁴⁵

אֱלִיל 'ēlîl, pl. אֱלִילִים 'ēlîlîm. n.m. insufficiency, worthlessness, esp. pl. worthless gods, idols (Lv 19:4; 26:1; Is 2:8.18.20.20; 10:10.11; 19:1.3; 31:7.7; Ez 30:13; Hb 2:18; Ps 97:7).⁴⁶ The Hebrew text of Psalm 96:⁴⁷ "For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens." was translated in the LXX⁴⁸ in this way:

44. וּפְגָשׁוּ צִיִּים אֶת־אֲוִיִּים וְשָׁעִיר עַל־רַעְהוּ יִקְרָא אֶדְ-שָׁם הַרְגִיעָה לִילִית וּמִצָּאָה לָהּ מָנוַח: 45. וַיַּעֲמֹד־לֹו כְהֹנִים לְבָמֹות וּלְשַׁעִירִים וּלְעִגְלִים אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:

46. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 47.

47. כִּי אֵלֵהֶם הָעַמִּים אֱלִילִים וַיַּהֲזֶה שָׁמַיִם עָשָׂה:

48. οτι παντες οι θεοι των εθνων δαιμονια ο δε κυριος τους ουρανους εποηυσεν
English translation by Lanz.

For all the gods of the nations are demons, but the Lord made the heavens.

It may be that the apostle Paul's statement in 1 Cor 10:20 has to be understood on the backdrop of this interpretation of Ps 96:5 through the LXX.

7.9.2 In the New Testament

1. God's oneness is acknowledged by demons. "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe - and shudder!" (Jas 2:19).
2. Jesus has full authority over demons.
 - (a) His authority of future judgment of the demons and unclean spirits (Mt 8:29).
 - (b) His authority to send demons away from a certain area (Mk 5:10) and send them into the abyss (Lk 8:31).
 - (c) His authority to let the demons enter the great herd of about 2000 pigs (Mt 8:30-33; Mk 5:11-13; Lk 8:32-33).
 - (d) Jesus cast out demons.
 - i. By the Spirit of God (Mt 12:28) or by the finger of God (Lk 11:20) which was a sign that the kingdom of God had come upon Israel.
 - ii. With a word Jesus cast out the spirits of those who were oppressed by demons (Mt 8:16).
 - iii. And he did not allow them to speak and thus make his identity known (Mk 1:23.26.27; 1:32-34; 3:11-12; Lk 4:33.35.36.41).
 - iv. Throughout all Galilee (Mk 1:39); on his way to Jerusalem (Lk 13:32). That Jesus could cast out demons was known "throughout all Syria" (Mt 4:24).
 - v. Where there was one demon: the little daughter of a Syrophoenician woman (Mk 7:25.26.29.30; Mt 15:22).

- vi. Where there were multiple demons in a person: Seven demons left Mary Magdalene (Mk 16:9; Lk 8:2; cf. Mt 12:43-45). There was a man or two men with many demons called "Legion" (Lk 8:27.29.30; 8:33.35.36.38; Mt 8:28.33; Mk 5:2.8; 5:13.15.16.18).
 - vii. Where after the casting out of the demon the person who was ill in some way, got healed, because the illness had been caused by the demon. A mute man could speak (Mt 9:32-33). A man who was blind and mute, was healed (Mt 12:22; cf. the mute man of Lk 11:14). A father asked Jesus to heal his son who was an epileptic and suffered terribly. For often he fell into the fire, and often into the water. The son was healed (Mt 17:15.18; Lk 9:42). In Mk 9:25 Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." See also Lk 6:18.
 - (e) Jesus gave his disciples the authority to cast out un-clean spirits or demons (Mt 10:1.8; Mt 12:27; Mk 3:14-15; Mk 6:7.13; Mk 16:17; Lk 9:1; Lk 10:17; Lk 11:19; Acts 5:16; 8:7).
 - (f) Someone was casting out demons in the name of Jesus who was not following Jesus. Jesus ordered not to stop him (Mk 9:38-39; Lk 9:49-50).
3. The wrong understanding of some people in the NT of John the Baptist and of Jesus.
- (a) The enemies of John the Baptist accused him of having a demon (Mt 11:18; Lk 7:33).
 - (b) The enemies of Jesus accused him to drive out demons "by the prince of demons" (Mt 9:34; Mt 12:24.27; Mk 3:22.30; Lk 11:15.18). In Jn 7:20 the crowd said to Jesus, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?" In Jn 8:48-49.52 the "Jews" said, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?", and Jesus rejected their accusation. In Jn 10:19-21 "there was a division among the Jews ... Many of

them said, 'He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?' Others said, 'These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?'"

- (c) When some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers conversed with Paul in Athens, some said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities" (= "demons": a demon here means something like a powerful spiritual personality) "because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection" (Acts 17:18).
- (d) Jesus predicts that "on that day" many false prophets will claim to have cast out demons in the name of Jesus, but that he never knew them (Mt 7:22).

4. Gentiles and demons.

- (a) Paul warns the Corinthians of partaking of sacrifices offered to idols because "what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (1 Cor 10:20).
- (b) Paul knew in his time of an information of the Holy Spirit "that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, 3 who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth" (1 Tm 4:1-3).
- (c) In Rv 9:20 "the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols".
- (d) Demons "coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet" start a demonic revival "performing signs" and going abroad to the kings of the whole world, "to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty" (Rv 16:13-14).

- (e) The place of the judged and punished Babylon becomes a kind of prison of demons and unclean spirits (Rv 18:2).
- 5. An unclean spirit outside its "host" (man or animal) does not feel well: "It passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none". It may try to reenter its former host. "Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first" (Mt 12:43-45; cf. par Lk 11:24-26).

This overview of the many verses of the NT which talk about demons shows that there is a lot of information. But what is not told, is also of significance. As soon as we ask why anybody of those who got liberated by Jesus, was demon-possessed in the first place, we realize that we have not much information about that. The intention of the gospels is to glorify Jesus by showing his authority over the demons, but not to satisfy our human curiosity.

Chapter 8

Humanity

The creation of man is already mentioned in the first chapter of the Bible. There man is the last of God's creations which switches God's view of his creation from "good" to "very good". During the first five days God saw that his creations were good: on the first day the light (Gn 1:4), on the third day the earth and the seas (1:10), and plants (1:12), on the fourth day the sun, moon and stars (1:18), on the fifth day living creatures in the waters and the birds in the air of heaven (1:21), and on the sixth day first the living creatures of the earth (1:25). But later on the sixth day when God had created man "in his image", we are told (1:31): 'And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.'

It seems as if the creation of man in God's image was the crowning masterpiece of God's creation leading his creative works to completion and perfection. With the creation of man everything was raised to the level of "very good". This shows us that the subject of this chapter "humanity" is a special one.

No other creature in Gn 1 gets this title of honor that it has been created in the image of God. The destiny of humanity is linked to the glory of God the Creator. But as high as the calling of man was, so deep was his fall into sin. First we shall deal with humanity in innocence and then with humanity in sin. Both subjects taken together will show us the need for salvation and for a savior thus paving the way for christology and soteriology.

8.1 Humanity in Innocence – Our Privileges

The Holy Scriptures tell us that after the creation of man there was a time when man remained innocent and sinless. We shall first focus on this time of humanity in innocence. One main source of information about this time are the first chapters of Genesis.

8.1.1 Created by God – all humans not just Adam and Eve

The Hebrew word for the first man "Adam" ('āḏām) points to the fact that Adam was formed by God "of dust from the ground" or "from the earth" ('āḏāmāh; Gn 2:7).¹ "Adam" is both the name of the first human individual (Gn 2:23.25; 3:8.9.12; 4:1) and of the whole human race (see Gn 5:1-2; 1:27; 2:5; 6:1.3; Eccl 7:29; 12:1). God is not only the creator of Adam and Eve, but also of all their children after them (Ex 4:11; Is 17:7; 45:12; Zec 12:1).

God created man for his own glory (Is 43:7; Eph 1:6.12.14; 1 Cor 10:31). Therefore the purpose of those men who acknowledge God in their life is to glorify him. Believers who know how precious it is to be in God's presence have good reasons to praise him (Ps 16:11; 27:4; 73:25-26; 84:1-2.10; Jn 10:10).²

It is a normal thing for a believer to rejoice in the Lord (Rom 5:2-3; Phil 4:4; 1 Thes 5:16-18; James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:6.8). And God rejoices over his people (Is 62:5; Zep 3:17-18).³ It is reasonable to glorify God (Rv 4:11; Rom 11:36; Mk 12:30).

8.1.2 Physical being - made from dust of the earth

According to Gn 2:7 man is a physical being, formed of the dust of the earth:

1. וַיִּצְרֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם עֹפָר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה
2. See Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 441.
3. See *ibid.*, p. 441.

Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.⁴

He was taken from the ground or earth and his destiny was to cultivate the earth (Gn 2:5,15; 3:17-19). The material body of man links him to the earth. He was created to fill the earth and rule it with the creatures on it (Gn 1:26-28). All further developments of agriculture, business, science, education and government are somehow related to the ability of man to cultivate and govern the earth which was given to him by the Creator before man's falling into sin.

8.1.3 Spiritual being – infused with God's spirit

According to the same verse Gn 2:7 which we have quoted above man is also a spiritual being. His material body was formed of dust from the ground, but he was not alive yet. This happened by God's breathing "into his nostrils the breath of life" so that "man became a living creature". God's breathing is related to God's Spirit (see subsection 13.1.3). The two parts form a third part as a holistic unity: The material body plus "the breath of life"⁵ from God's breathing result in their being united in the third part "a living creature" or "a living soul".⁶ The Bible speaks of body, soul and spirit of man (1 Thes 5:23).

This brings us to the question of *monism*, *dichotomy* or *trichotomy*. *Monism* is the view that man is basically one element, namely his body. A man's body is his person, soul and spirit are just other expressions to refer to a person. According to this view there is no separate existence for any soul after the body dies. We will see that this does not really fit the biblical

4. וַיִּצְרֵה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם עָפָר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּנְפַח בְּאָפָיו נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה:

5. Hebrew: נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים LXX: πνοήν ζωής

6. Hebrew: נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה nepeš hayyāh Greek of the LXX: ψυχὴν ζῶσαν psychēn zōsan. The Hebrew word nepeš means beside other things "that which breathes, the breathing substance or being = נֶפֶשׁ , anima, the soul, the inner being of man", also "living being, life, self, person, desire, appetite, emotion, and passion" according to Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 659.

data. *Dichotomy* is the view that man is made up of two basic parts, body on the one hand and soul or spirit on the other, understanding that soul and spirit are used as synonyms. *Trichotomy* holds that there are three parts in man, body, soul and spirit and that soul and spirit have to be distinguished.⁷

We think that dichotomy is a useful view to understand much of the biblical teaching about man, because often the words soul and spirit are used in an overlapping and a kind of synonymous way.

But we also think that in certain contexts it is more helpful to distinguish between soul and spirit (1 Thes 5:23; Heb 4:12; 1 Cor 15:44-50). Especially the text in 1 Cor 15 shows with its eschatological force that there has to be a great difference between soul and spirit, because Paul clearly distinguishes between the body of the first Adam as a "soul-body" and the body of the last Adam as a "spiritual body". Soul and spirit can not be understood as synonyms here, but stand in the same contrast as the list of word pairs in 1 Cor 15:42-43.

In this context we could ask where the human souls come from after God had created Adam's soul as described in Gn 2:7. Grudem explains that there are two main views in Christian tradition trying to give an answer:

Creationism is the view that God creates a new soul for each person and sends it to that person's body sometime between conception and birth. Traducianism, on the other hand, holds that the soul as well as the body of a child are inherited from the baby's mother and father at the time of conception. Both views have had numerous defenders in the history of the church, with creationism eventually becoming the prevailing view in the Roman Catholic Church. Luther was in favor of traducianism, while Calvin favored creationism.⁸

Pre-existentialism is a popular view today, but it has no support in Scripture. It is widespread and combined with the idea of reincarnation found in Eastern religions as Hinduism and Buddhism.

7. Cf. Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 472-3. Grudem himself is in favor of dichotomy, p. 481.

8. *ibid.*, p. 484. Grudem himself is against traducianism, p. 485.

In favor of traducianism the following verses could be used: Gen 1:27; 5:1ff; Heb 7:10, in favor of creationism: Ps 127:3; 139:13; Isa 42:5; Zec 12:1; Heb 12:9. Perhaps this question is a good example where we could say: "We do not know for sure." Maybe sometimes we have questions which were not really asked in the Bible and therefore are not really answered there.

I personally would prefer traducianism. This is related to Paul's statement in Acts 17:26 "And he made from one man every nation of mankind..." If we understand man as a holistic unity of body, soul and spirit and combine it with the idea that we all are children of Adam and Eve, then things fit better together on the backdrop of traducianism.

After Adam's and Eve's sin there is a tradition of sinning in mankind (cf. Rom 5:12; Ps 51:5). If we follow traducianism, all is inherited from the parents, including the spirit. It is easier to understand that all of man is corrupted by sin (2 Cor 7:1), if all of it is inherited from already corrupted parents. If creationism is correct and God creates every spirit afresh, why does this person then stand in a tradition of sin? Therefore I prefer the view that the whole framework of human existence is given as coming from Adam and Eve, including the spiritual part of humanity.

The body is the material part of man, the spirit the immaterial and the soul is the mediator between both, belonging as well to the body as to the spirit. The "place" of the soul within the body is in the blood (Lv 17:11).⁹

As far as the soul belongs to the body, it can die with it (Lv 21:11; 24:17; Nm 6:6; 19:11; 23:10; Jgs 16:30; Ez 18:4,20.)

As far as the soul belongs to the spirit, it leaves the body when someone dies (Gn 35:18; 2 Sm 1:9). The resurrection of the only son of the widow in Zarephath in answer to the prayer of the prophet Elijah shows us that the soul can return to the body (1 Kgs 17:21-22):

21 Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this child's life come into him again." 22 And the Lord listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived.

The word translated here with "life" is the *neḗš* or soul. When the soul returned to the boy, he became alive again. David praises God for healing him from an almost fatal disease in Ps 30:2-3:

2 O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. 3 O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.

David almost died. He speaks about his recovering from the illness and says that God brought his soul up from Sheol. The language used here seems to imply that the soul of somebody who dies goes down into Sheol which is seen as a pit. In Acts 20:9-10 Eutychus is dead, but his soul (often translated here with life) is still in him.

We can understand the fact that "he was taken up dead" in the way that he was really dead and they would have buried him. But Paul sensed that his soul had not yet left his body. He trusted in God that this boy would live and that it was not necessary to start lamenting and burying him. So Paul continued with the church service. And God revived the boy to the great comfort of the congregation. Jesus taught that man cannot kill the soul (Mt 10:28):

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.¹⁰ Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Man can only kill the body. God can let the soul and the body of man get lost in hell. Therefore we should take God much more seriously than man. It seems that Jesus speaks in Mt 10:28 of the soul as far as it belongs to the spirit. In Rv 6:9 we find a similar use of the word "souls"¹¹ for the martyrs in the presence of God in heaven (see also: section 18.1).

10. καὶ μὴ φοβείσθε ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποκτεννόντων τὸ σῶμα τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν μὴ δυναμένων ἀποκτεῖναι•

11. εἶδον ὑποκάτω τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἐσφαγμένων διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν εἶχον.

8.1.4 Made in the image of God

The greatest honor of man in creation is that he is made "in the image of God".¹²

In the Old Testament

We read about this in Gn 1:26-27:

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.¹³ And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him;¹⁴ male and female he created them.

Man made in the image and likeness of God is destined to have a dominating role on earth. That seems to be part of his being made in God's likeness.

Words used. The Hebrew word here translated with image is צֶלֶם "selem" and is used in Gn 5:3 and 9:6 in a similar way as in 1:26-27. In addition to this the word is used for two-dimensional pictures of human beings (Ez 23:14) and for three-dimensional images of the tumors and the mice with which God had plagued the Philistines (1 Sm 6:5.11) and for images of idols (2 Kgs 11:18; 2 Chr 23:17; Ez 7:20; 16:17; Amos 5:26), for the "shadow" of a man (Ps 39:6) and for the fact that God rejects the picture of the wicked on the day when they are judged (Ps 73:20).¹⁵

The Hebrew word דְמוּת "dāmūt" in Gn 1:26 means "likeness"¹⁶ and is used for the likeness between God and Adam and Seth in Gn 1:26 and 5:1.3

12. For this section cf. Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 442-450.

13.

14.

15. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 853-4.

16. See *ibid.*, p. 198.

נִעֲשָׂה אָדָם בְּצִלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ
וַיְבָרֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצִלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ

in a very similar way as "şelem" is used. It is also used in the following OT verses. Is 40:18 tells us that man cannot create or produce a likeness which really and truly resembles God. In 2 Kgs 16:10 King Ahaz sent a "likeness" of the altar at Damascus to Uriah the priest, probably meaning a "model" of the altar so that this altar could be copied and used in Jerusalem. It is also used for the likeness of oxen (2 Chr 4:3), of the venom of a serpent (Ps 58:5), of a great multitude (Is 13:4). Ezekiel uses it very often in his careful language to report the "likenesses" he had seen in his visions of the cherubim and of the glory of the Lord (Ez 1:5.10.13.16; 1:22.26.28; 8:2; 10:1.10.21.22). In Ez 23:15 it is used for the pictures of Babylonians on the wall. It is in total agreement with the teaching of the likeness of God and man in Genesis 1 that Ezekiel's vision of the glory of the Lord has its consummation in the revelation of God in "a likeness with a human appearance" (Ez 1:26-28).

In Dn 10:16 Daniel says that in his vision "one in the likeness of the children of man touched my lips". Reading Daniel's vision, one gets the impression that this is a revelation of God. It seems also that John's vision of the divine Jesus Christ in Rv 1:9-20 points back to Dn 10:4-21 so to say identifying the divine person who appeared to Daniel with Jesus Christ (so with Keil¹⁷). Then this would be another example of a self-revelation of God where he chose to reveal himself "in the likeness ... of man".

Even after the fall man is still made in the image of God. In Gn 5:3 "şelem" "image" is used for the resemblance between Adam and his son Seth. The idea is that Seth inherited the image of his father who was created in the image of God so that Seth (and all the other descendants of Adam) inherit the honor to be born in the image of God. That this understanding is intended becomes clear when we look at Gn 9:6: 'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.'

This proves that even after falling into sin man's quality of being made in God's image is not lost. This quality sets him apart from all animals

17. C. F. Keil, Ezekiel, Daniel, Martin, James <trans>; Easton, M. G. <trans> (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 410.

which can be slaughtered and eaten. But to kill a human being is a capital offense because every human being resembles God the Creator. "The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God."¹⁸

In the New Testament

Words used. The LXX translates the Hebrew word דְמוּת *dəməūt* in Gn 1:26 with the Greek word ὁμοίωσις *hōmōiōsis* "likeness". The LXX translates the Hebrew word "šelem" in Gn 1:26 with εἰκὼν *ēikōn* "image". We can follow both words in the New Testament and see where the subject of man being created in the image of God is taken up.¹⁹

Man created in the image or likeness of God in the New Testament. The fact that man is made in the likeness of God is given as a reason in the New Testament that we should not speak ill of other people or curse them (James 3:9).

Jesus touches our subject when he answered the question whether one should pay taxes to Caesar or not (Mt 22:20-21; cf. also Mk 12:16; Lk 20:24):

20 And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" 21 They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

The picture on the coin for the tax was Caesar's. This proves the tax coin to be Caesar's, and he should get his own back. The image on man is God's. This proves man to be God's own. And God should get his own back. Man

18. Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 442.

19. In Heb 10:1 the word *ēikōn* is used to denote the body which casts the shadow, the body being the real thing and the shadow being only the resemblance of it. In other verses in the New Testament ἡ εἰκὼν *ēikōn* image is used for idolatry (Rom 1:23), and especially for the idolatry of worshiping the image of the beast in Revelation (13:14.15; 14:9.11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4).

being made in the image of God, should commit himself to God to serve and worship him.

Within the New Testament Paul talks about man as made in the image of God in 1 Cor 11:7 pointing back to Gn 1:26-27:²⁰ The context here is related to his teaching about the continuing difference between the genders in this world and how this should be taken into account in the service of the church (cf. also Gal 3:28-29).

Jesus Christ as the image of God. In the New Testament Jesus Christ himself is the image of God in a most supreme way (Col 1:15-17):

15 He is the image of the invisible God²¹, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Jesus is the image of the invisible God and the firstborn of all creation in a way that all things have been created through him and all things are sustained and hold together through him or "in him".

The idea that Jesus is the image of the invisible God is also implied in a word of Jesus in John 14:9 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.' In God's Son Jesus Christ the beauty, holiness and glory of the Father are revealed to man in a way that he can perceive it without having to die (Jn 1:18).

That the glory of God the Father is revealed on the face of Jesus Christ as the image of God, is taught by Paul in 2 Cor 4:3-6. This glory of God in Christ has the power to transform believers who come through the Holy Spirit into the presence of the Lord so that they become more like the Lord (2 Cor 3:18).

20. In the following verses 1 Cor 11:8-12 Paul points back to Gn 2:18-25. See also subsection 8.1.5.

21. ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου

Quite in agreement with this section Paul teaches in Rom 8:29-30 that God's elect are predestined to become more like the Son of God and to partake in glory. This means that the image of God's Son is the perfect prototype or pattern of a new mankind.

Paul speaks of this when he talks about the resurrection body (1 Cor 15:42-50). As long as our body is not transformed in the resurrection of the dead or - if we are still alive until Christ's second coming - in the transformation of the body of the living believers on that day, our body is perishable, in dishonor and weak and "natural".

The Greek words which are translated with "natural body" in 15:44-46 are σῶμα ψυχικόν *sōma psychikōn*. Paul wants to point to the "soul" of man as the decisive factor of the first man Adam. His essence was that he was a "living being", literally "a living soul". Paul here refers back to Gn 2:7.²²

The essence of the last Adam, Jesus Christ, is that he "became a life-giving spirit. His resurrection body is a "spiritual body" σῶμα πνευματικόν *sōma pneumatikōn*. This body is imperishable, in glory and in power.

Adam had a body, a "soul-body". When he was created he had the potential to die in case of sin (Gn 2:17). He had a potentially perishable body. Adam's body of the old mankind is called "flesh and blood" in 1 Cor 15:50. This old mankind with the old perishable body cannot enter the kingdom of God, the coming world of righteousness. The reason why this old mankind is called "flesh and blood" is related to the soul the place of which is "in the blood".

Jesus Christ first became man with the body of the old mankind, with such a "soul-body" as Adam had. But when he had risen from the dead, he became "a life-giving spirit". This does not mean that he had no body when he rose (cf. Lk 24:37-40). He has a body indeed, but a "spiritual body".

This section also has a certain relevance when it comes to the question whether man is made of two or three parts. Whether he is made of body and soul only, or body and spirit understanding soul and spirit

22. Ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδάμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν•

as synonyms. Or whether he is made of body and soul and spirit. Paul seems to distinguish between soul and spirit, as he seems to distinguish between the "natural body" or "soul-body" on the one hand and the "spiritual body" on the other.

Christ's resurrection body is a spiritual body. On his resurrection day he could enter a house while the doors were shut (Jn 20:19,26). His body is not made of the dust of the earth, but of "heavenly material" (1 Cor 15:48). Our resurrection body will resemble Christ's appearance as sure as our earthly body resembles Adam's now: "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven" (1 Cor 15:49). What a glory is in store for believers. What an honor it is to be made in the image of God and to be resurrected in the image of Christ.

Ethical implications of being made in the image of God. God's plan that we should resemble Christ has ethical implications according to Paul's teaching in Col 3:5-14 (KJV):

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: 7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. 8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:²³ 11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. 12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; 13 Forbearing one

23. 10 καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν

another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. 14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

It is clear that Adam did not loose his honor of having been made in God's image after he had sinned. But when we look at Col 3 we do realize that God's image has been distorted by man's sins as far as ethical behavior is concerned: On the side of the old man, of sinful Adam we have "fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of our mouth and lies. On the side of the new man which is identical with Christ and his character we have the true knowledge of God, holiness, being loved by God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another and charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

8.1.5 Male and female in the image of God

We have seen in Gn 1:26-27 that God created man both male and female in his own image. Gn 2:18-25 give more information about the forming of the woman out of the side of Adam:

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them ... But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and

they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

It is not good for Adam to be alone.

Here we find that God states that it would not be good for man / Adam to be alone. It is interesting that here we have mentioned a "not good" before the falling of Adam and Eve into sin. This stands in contrast to the repeated "good" and final "very good" in Gn 1. Adam is still in paradise, but it would not have been good for him to be or stay alone. Man is a social being until today. He needs other men. The basic unity of human society is man, woman, children, the family.

The first preparation in Gn 2 of God's forming the woman for the man is that Adam gets the task of naming the animals. This is in agreement with his domination over them (cf. Gn 1:26-27). Adam's naming of the animals is an expression of his authority over them (Gn 2:19-20). The statement that "for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him" creates a kind of suspense in the story. Animals cannot fill the place which according to God's purpose should be taken by a fellow human being.

Eve a perfect match for Adam - equal, but different.

The fact that the woman was taken from the side of Adam should be compared to the other statement that Adam was taken and formed from the ground. Adam was taken and formed of dust from the ground with his task to work the ground.

The woman was taken out of the side of man and formed for man to be a helpful companion for him. If we add to this the further development that this woman became the mother of all men on earth and therefore was called "Eve", a name related to her giving life to all those children and descendants of Adam (Gn 3:20), then we realize that women are made for relationships. They are superbly gifted to be wives of their husbands and mothers of their children. They are masters in relationships. Often the mother of a family is called upon for many things from the side of her husband and perhaps from

several children (Gn 5:4).²⁴

Consequences of sin especially in the areas of strength.

Later the consequences for their sins reach Adam and Eve in their respective areas of strength and special gifting: Adam will have problems in working the ground. Eve will have problems in her relationship with her husband and in giving birth to her children (Gn 3:16).

The joy of married life.

When God brought the woman to the man, Adam realized that this is the answer to his loneliness (Gn 2:23):

This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.²⁵

The idea that someone is of the same bone and flesh is also found in Gn 29:13-14 where Laban realized the similarity between Jacob and himself when he had heard Jacob's story. Man and woman are made for each other. They are equal, both are created in the image of God. They are similar and they are different. Their similarities make them fit for each other. Their differences are complementary so that one gives the other what he is lacking. Both father and mother with their complementary gifting are supposed to be together a blessing for their children. Gn 2:24 is the foundation of biblical sexual ethics:

24. Cf. Madhura Ingallhalikara and Alex Smitha, "Sex differences in the structural connectome of the human brain," Proceedings of National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, November 2013, <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2013/11/27/1316909110.full.pdf+html>, p. 1: "Sex differences in human behavior show adaptive complementarity: Males have better motor and spatial abilities, whereas females have superior memory and social cognition skills. Studies also show sex differences in human brains but do not explain this complementarity... Overall, the results suggest that male brains are structured to facilitate connectivity between perception and coordinated action, whereas female brains are designed to facilitate communication between analytical and intuitive processing modes."

וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הִפְעֵם עֵצָם מְעַצְמִי וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי לִזְנוּת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ
לִקְחָהּ זֹאת:

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

The fact that the man leaves father and mother implies that the beginning of the married life of husband and wife is a public act. Everybody knows that they are now husband and wife.

One flesh, a unity not to be dissolved.

They become one flesh which means a unity which should not be dissolved (Mt 19:4-6):²⁶

Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

Here we can see that the teaching of Jesus about married life is based on Gn 1:27 and 2:24. It is based on how God created man as male and female "from the beginning" and on what God said about their being one flesh. This is also the reason why marriage should be held in honor among all believers (Heb 13:4).

Equality in personhood and importance.

It is important to see that man and woman are both created in the image of God (Gn 1:27; 5:1-2) and so are equal in personhood and importance before God.²⁷ Pointing back to Genesis the apostle Paul writes (1 Cor 11:7-12):

7 For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.

26. Cf. also Mk 10:2-12; Mal 2:14-16.

27. So with Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 456-459.

9 Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.
10 That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; 12 for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.

Paul makes some statements which underline the equality of man and woman and some which present their different roles. We first concentrate here on the equality. After having created Adam and then Eve, God nowadays uses the woman to bring forth man ("so man is now born of woman"). This implies that man and woman are equal. As God made Eve from Adam, he now makes man from woman. The statement "in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman" leads us to the same conclusion. Man and woman are interdependent. Not only as a couple, but also in the relationship of children and parents. No man is born without his mother, no girl is born without her father. God wants us to acknowledge our interdependence and honor each other in our differences.

God wants the husband to honor his wife (1 Pt 3:7) and love her as Christ loved the church giving his life for her (Eph 5:25).

The famous closure of the book of Proverbs (31:10-31) draws the picture of a wife and mother who is an excellent manageress and business woman, full of endeavors and ably using the opportunities which present themselves to her and at the same time highly appreciated by the members of her household.

In the New Testament the outpouring of the Holy Spirit brings gifts to all, men and women whom God wants to use powerfully to build his church and kingdom (Acts 2:17-18; Joel 2:28-29); 1 Cor 12:7.11; 1 Pt 4:10. In this context one very important verse to honor man and woman in Christ is from Paul's letter to the Galatians (3:28):

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Differences in roles.

At the same time it is equally important to recognize that according to the Holy Scriptures man and woman have different roles.²⁸

The innertrinitarian relationship as a role model. The same Paul who wrote Gal 3:28, also wrote 1 Cor 11:3 giving us a framework of understanding of manhood and womanhood in Christ:

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.²⁹

Paul speaks of God the Father being the head of Christ, that means that Christ submits to the guidance of the Father. We can learn from Christ's relationship with the Father and his submission to God the Father as Grudem puts it: "Between the members of the Trinity there has been equality in importance, personhood, and deity throughout all eternity. But there have also been differences in roles between the members of the Trinity."³⁰ The Bible teaches us that Jesus Christ is God the Son (Jn 1:1-3.14.18) from eternity, having equal and full divine glory with the Father (Phil 2:5-6; Col 2:9; Jn 17:24). But the Son willingly submitted in his earthly life to the Father's will (Phil 2:5-9). He will also submit to the Father when the Father will have put all his enemies under his feet "that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). As Christ submits to the Father, a man should submit to Christ and a wife should submit to her husband (1 Cor 11:3).

Different roles of man and woman before the fall.

28. So with Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 459-465.

29. θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι ὅτι παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἡ κεφαλὴ ὁ Χριστός ἐστιν, κεφαλὴ δὲ γυναικὸς ὁ ἀνὴρ, κεφαλὴ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁ θεός.

30. So with Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 459.

Man was created first, then the woman as a helper for the man (1 Tm 2:13; 1 Cor 11:8-9; Gn 2:7.18-23 1 Chr 5:1-2)

Adam named Eve. As man had received God's blessing with the authority over the animals of the earth in Gn 1:26.28 and as a sign of his authority he gave the names to all the animals in 2:19, so Adam named his wife first "woman" (2:23 and then "Eve" (3:20) as an expression of his authority.

God named the human race "man" (Adam), not "woman" (Gn 5:2). In the Bible Adam represents the first whole human race, Jesus Christ as son of man or son of Adam inaugurated the new mankind (1 Cor 15:22.49; Rom 5:12-21).

What commandment is for whom? In the Bible, Old and New Testament alike, the wife should submit to her husband and respect his authority (e.g. Eph 5:22.33). The husband should love his wife "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25) and should "not be harsh" with her (Col 3:19).

Often the commandments are given to those who have a weakness in that particular area. If we husbands are told to love our wives and not be harsh with them, maybe we have a problem here. If the wives are told to submit to their husbands and respect them, maybe they have a problem, a weakness in this particular area.

If both, husband and wife, obey what the word of God tells each of them, then married life can be a source of joy for the couple and the whole family. If one part rejects the word of God, the other is still challenged to glorify God by following his lead (e.g. 1 Pt 3:1; 1 Cor 7:14), even if family life is not as blissful as one would wish. For the role of women amongst God's people see section 16.3.

The gift of staying single.

In the New Testament there is a special gift of God mentioned for staying single because of the kingdom of God (Mt 19:11-12; 1 Cor 7:7-8.32-

34.38.40). In the Old Testament there are not many examples of people who voluntarily stayed single. One of them would be the prophet Elijah. In the New Testament we have John the Baptist, Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul as famous examples of people staying single for the sake of their special calling.

8.1.6 Social being - made for relationship

We have already seen from Gn 2:18 that "it is not good that the man should be alone". This specifies man as a social being. He is made for relationship. He would not be happy if he is cut off from all fellowship with other fellow human beings. Normally he has his place in life by being part of a social network: being father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, uncle, aunt, cousin etc. etc.; belonging to a clan, a tribe, a nation; being leader or someone who is led in the social hierarchy.

This fact of man as a social being has also an influence on God's revelation towards man. Much of biblical ethics dwells on a holy and pure life within social relationships. To honor father and mother, to be faithful to one's wife or one's husband. Not to steal what belongs to the neighbor, not to harm his good name by slandering etc. etc. To care especially for the weaker parts of society, the widows, the orphans, the foreigner. A holy life is a life of love towards God and towards one's neighbors.

8.1.7 Responsible being - God's vice-regents on earth

Man's dominion as part of his being in the image of God.

One aspect of man's being created in God's image is that man has dominion over the earth with the creatures on the earth, in the waters and in the air (Gn 1:26-28):

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that

creeps on the earth.”³¹ 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”³²

Words used for man's dominion.

There are two words used for man having dominion over the earth or subduing it.

רָדָה rādāh to have dominion. In our section this word³³ is used for the rule of man on earth and over all other creatures somehow related to the earth (Gn 1:26-28). The same word is used for the rule of the coming Christ (Nm 24:19; Ps 72:8; 110:2) and for Solomon's dominion "over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphshah to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates" (1 Kgs 4:24). Solomon's chief officers ruled over the workers from the people (1 Kgs 9:23; 2 Chr 8:10).

An Israelite is not allowed to rule over his servant and fellow Israelite ruthlessly (Lv 25:43.46.53). But the shepherds of Israel have ruled God's people exactly in that way, with force and harshness (Ez 34:4). The priests ruled in an nonspiritual way over the common people (Jer 5:31).

The threat that "those who hate you shall rule over you" in Lv 26:17 is listed as part of the punishments in Lv 26 for the disobedience of the Israelites. This threat is seen as fulfilled in Neh 9:28). The Egyptians "will never again rule over the nations" (Ez 29:15). God lets the one from the east have victory over kings and rule them (Is 41:2). Redeemed Israel will rule

31. וַיִּרְדּוּ בְרֵנֶת הַיָּם וּבְעֹפֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֶמֶשׂ הָאָרֶץ:
וַיִּבְרָא אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פָּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכַשֶּׁה וּרְדּוּ.

32. בְּדִגַּת הַיָּם וּבְעֹפֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל-חַיַּה הָרֶמֶשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ:
33. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 921-22.

over their former oppressors, including Babylon (Is 14:2.6). The righteous will rule over the wicked fools who go down to Sheol (Ps 49:15).

כָּבַשׁ *kābaš* **to subdue** The root *kḇš*³⁴ in Gn 1:28 is used in Qal for man subduing the earth, also for the Israelites intending to subdue people from Judah as their slaves (2 Chr 28:10) or for parents who force their children to be slaves because they are so poor (Neh 5:5) or for rich people from Judah who force their poorer brothers to be slaves again (Jer 34:11.16 or for the question of the king whether Haman would "assault" the queen Esther even in the king's house (Esther 7:8). It is used for subduing enemies in battle (Zec 9:15). It is also used wonderfully for God "subduing" and so graciously forgiving Israel's sins in his future salvation (Mi 7:19).

The root *kḇš* is used in the Niph'al for the land that is subdued before the Lord (Nm 32:22; 1 Chr 22:18) or before the Israelites (Nm 32:29; Joshua 18:1). In Pi'el it is used for David subduing several nations (2 Sm 8:11).

Man's dominion is a blessing, but is causing problems if he sins.

Gn 1:28 shows that the rule of man over the earth is related to his multiplying and filling the earth and is part of the blessing of God on man. Because man was so central for the earth, the sin of Adam would bring death into the world (Rom 5:12; 8:20).

But in the same way would the salvation of the children of God in Christ pave the way for the creation to "be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom 8:21).

The fact that God has given earth to man has enormous consequences for salvation history. Prayer and intercession of pious men become important and of highest influence (Gn 18:16-33; 19:29; Ps 106:23; Rv 5:8; 8:3-5). The heavens answer the earth (Hos 2:21) or what believers bind or loose on earth is bound or loosed in heaven (Mt 18:18).

34. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 461.

Man's responsibility towards God.

With great calling comes great responsibility. God created Adam and Eve as responsible towards their creator. They could sin and they could die (Gn 2:15-17):

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."³⁵

If we understand the imperatives in Gn 1:28³⁶ not as commandments but as the unfolding of the blessing mentioned there, then it is possible to see Gn 2:16-17 as the first commandment for man in the Bible. Indeed it seems, for the time being, that this was the one and only commandment for man in the garden of Eden.

Is this commandment part of a "covenant of works"?

Reformed theology has understood this commandment as God's first covenant with man, "the covenant of works".³⁷ And while the word covenant is not mentioned in the immediate context of Gn 2:16-17, the verse Hosea 6:7 has served as a proof text for this understanding (see Hos 6:4-7):

4 What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?
What shall I do with you, O Judah?
Your love is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes early away.
5 Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets;

16 וַיִּצְוֵה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל-הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכָּל עֵץ-הָגֶן אָכַל תֹּאכַל: 17 וּמִעֵץ הַדַּעַת שָׁבוּ וְרָע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי בְיוֹם אֲכָלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת:
36. "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion ..."

37. See for example Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 516-518.

I have slain them by the words of my mouth,
 and my judgment goes forth as the light.
 6 For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
 the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.
 7 But like Adam they transgressed the covenant;
 there they dealt faithlessly with me.³⁸

In the context here God compares the repeated breaking of God's covenant through Ephraim and Judah with the disobedience and transgression of Adam who broke God's "covenant" in the garden of Eden. Of course we have to remember that God here is looking back from the time of Hosea in the eighth century before Christ to the time of Adam. "To make a covenant" or literally "to cut a covenant" (See e.g. Gn 15:18³⁹ was a customary action of mankind after paradise and after having fallen into sin. To do this animals could be killed and cut into pieces (Gn 15:10; Jer 34:18). Then the two parties would pass between the pieces of the sacrificed animals to confirm that they agree to fulfill the stipulations of the covenant (Gn 15:17-18; Jer 34:18).

If man had stayed faithful to God, he would have kept easy access to the tree of life. He would have lived forever (Gn 2:9.16; 3:22) and have enjoyed the fellowship with God forever (Gn 3:8).

It is important to remember that Gn 2-3 do not only tell us that man can die in case of sin, but that he can live forever if he remains faithful to God and stays in his covenant fellowship. Eternal life is a gift that mankind remembers since the time of the garden of Eden. A covenant of works implies that 100 percent faithfulness and obedience towards God is rewarded with eternal life and access into the presence of God.

No man after Adam's and Eve's falling into sin has ever fulfilled the conditions of this covenant except one, Jesus Christ. He would have had the right of eternal life without ever dying, but he sacrificed his holy blood and life to ransom a fallen and lost mankind (Gal 3:10-14; 4:4-5; John 3:16; 1 John 2:1-2).

38. וְהָמָּה כְּאָדָם עֲבָרוּ בְרִית שָׁם בְּגֵדוֹ כִּי:
 39. בָּיִת הָיָה כִּרְתֵּי יְהוָה אֶת־אָבְרָם בְּרִית לֵאמֹר לְיִרְעָךְ נָתַתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת מִנְּהַר
 מִצְרַיִם עַד־הַנָּהָר הַגָּדֹל נְהַר־פָּרָת:

8.2 Humanity in Sin - Our Problem

When Adam and Eve broke the one and only commandment they had received from God, they quickly realized that they had made a big mistake in not trusting God.

8.2.1 What is sin?

Sin is evil, is disobedience, falling short of God's mark and law, and guilt which has to be punished.

Words Used

רַע *raʿ* is an adjective meaning "bad, evil"⁴⁰. The antonym is "good" **טוֹב** *ṭôḇ*. In Gn 8:21 "the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth". The men of Sodom are called "evil" in Gn 13:13. The word is not only used for moral evil, but also something unpleasant or hurtful. The LXX translates *raʿ* in Gn 8:21 with an inclination to "evil" (τα πονηρα) and the "evil men" of Sodom are called πονηροὶ *pōnērōi* in Gn 13:13. We are told not to "fall in with the many to do evil" (κακια *kakia*) in Ex 23:2.

רָשָׁע *rāšāʿ* is an adjective meaning "wicked, criminal"⁴¹. One antonym is "righteous" **צַדִּיק** *ṣaddîq*. *rāšāʿ* is used in legal contexts for guilty criminals as in Gn 18:23.25 where God is seen as the supreme judge of the earth who is about to punish the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. The LXX translates *rāšāʿ* in Gn 18:23.25 with "ungodly" (ασεβης *asēbēs*) and in Ex 23:1 with "unrighteous, unjust" (αδικος *adikōs*).

40. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 948. It is found 142 times in the OT according to Even-Shoshan, A New Concordance of the Bible, p. 1080-1.

41. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 957. It is found 263 times in the OT according to Even-Shoshan, A New Concordance of the Bible, p. 1093-5.

חַטָּאת *ḥaṭṭā'ṭ* is a feminine noun meaning "sin, sin-offering".⁴² It is related to a verb which means "miss, go wrong, sin". It can be illustrated with "missing a target". But often it is just synonymous with the other words mentioned here for sin and guilt. In Gn 4:7 God warns Cain of the power of sin which was like a crouching beast at his door waiting to attack, but he should overcome sin. Cain did not heed this advice and so he killed his brother. In Gn 18:20 the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is "very grave" which leads to their destruction by God's judgment. The LXX translates *ḥaṭṭā'ṭ* in Gn 18:20 with "sin" (ἁμαρτία *hamartia*) and in Gn 31:36 with "sin" (ἁμαρτημα *harmartēma*).

חַטָּה *ḥeṭ'* is a masculine noun meaning "sin".⁴³ It is used e.g. in Gn 41:9 and Lv 19:17. The LXX translates *ḥeṭ'* in Gn 41:9 and in Lv 19:17 with "sin" (ἁμαρτία *hamartia*).

חַטְיָא *ḥaṭṭā'āh* is a feminine noun meaning "sin".⁴⁴ It is used e.g. in Is 5:18 and Ex 34:7. The LXX translates *ḥaṭṭā'āh* in Ex 34:7 with "sin" (ἁμαρτία *hamartia*) and in Is 5:18 with "lawlessness" (ἀνομία *anōmia*).

חַטְיָא *ḥaṭṭā'āh* is a feminine noun meaning "sin".⁴⁵ It is used e.g. in the phrase "great sin" (Gn 20:9; Ex 32:21.30.31; 2 Kgs 17:21). The LXX translates *ḥaṭṭā'āh* in Gn 20:9 and in 2 Kgs 17:21 with "sin" (ἁμαρτία *hamartia*).

42. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 308. It is found 221 times in the OT according to Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Bible*, p. 359-60.

43. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 307. It is found 33 times in the OT according to Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Bible*, p. 358.

44. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 308. It is found 73 times in the OT according to Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Bible*, p. 359.

45. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 308. It is found 8 times in the OT according to Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Bible*, p. 358.

עוֹן 'āwōn is a masculine noun and can mean both iniquity and the punishment of iniquity.⁴⁶ For example in Gn 4:13 it is probable that Cain found his "punishment" too severe. It could also be translated with his "guilt" being too great, but it seems preferable that he did not have so much insight (cf. also 19:15). In Gn 15:16 "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete", so their punishment will not happen yet for centuries to come. Judah acknowledges before Joseph that "God has found out the guilt of your servants" (Gn 44:16). If somebody commits idolatry, God is "a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate" him (Ex 20:5). The LXX translates 'āwōn in Gn 4:13 with "guilt" (αἰτία *aitia*), in 15:16 with "sins" (αἱ ἁμαρτίαι *hai hamartiai*), in Gn 19:15 with "lawlessness" (ἀνομία *anōmia*), and in Gn 44:16 with "injustice" (ἀδικία *adikia*).

פֶּשַׁע *peša'* is a masculine noun meaning "transgression".⁴⁷ In Gn 31:36 it is used for the alleged stealing of the household gods of Laban by Jacob or his family. In Gn 50:17 it denotes the evil which Joseph's brothers had done to him. The LXX translates *peša'* in Gn 31:36 with "unjust deed" (ἀδικημα *adikēma*) and in Gn 50:17 with "injustice" (ἀδικία *adikia*).

A look at certain texts where several of these above expressions are used at the same time shows that they are often used synonymously (Ex 34:7; Lv 16:16,21; Nm 14:18; 1 Sm 24:11; 25:28; 1 Kgs 8:50; Ps 51:3,5).

The teaching of Gn 3:1-7 about sin.

Man is tempted and led astray by the serpent to sin. The serpent is introduced as "more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made" (Gn 3:1). If we only read Genesis 3, we could think of the snake as only an animal. But the further revelation of the Bible interprets

46. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 730-1. It is found 229 times in the OT according to Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Bible*, p. 842-3.

47. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 833. It is found 93 times in the OT according to Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Bible*, p. 966.

this snake as an instrument of Satan. For example Revelation 12 has a lot of links with Genesis, and with Genesis 3 in particular (e.g. Gn 3:15).

1. The serpent attacks the weakest part of man and deceives the woman (Gn!03:01; 1 Tm 2:14).
2. The serpent undermines man's thankfulness towards God by concentrating on God's negative commandments (Gn 3:1).
3. The serpent sows the seed of doubt towards God and his word.
 - (a) The serpent accuses God of lying (3:4-5).
 - (b) The serpent denies the promised punishment of God (3:4).
4. The serpent promises man to be like God (3:5).

8.2.2 Results of sin – endangered relationships, with God and one another

The relationship between men and God got broken because Adam and Eve hid themselves when God came to the garden (Gn 3:8-10). It seems that before their sinning God frequently visited them in the garden and that was the reason they immediately recognized that it was God who was coming. Now they do not run to him to meet him, but hide from him. Adam to make his guilt seem lighter speaks of the woman whom God gave him as the one who led him into sin, indirectly accusing God as the one who caused sin because he gave him such a woman (3:12). It is clear that another result of sin is that the relationship between Adam and Eve got endangered. Adam confronted with his sin immediately points to the fact that the woman which God had given him, gave him the fruit (3:12). Adam tries to reduce the weight of his own sin by letting the guilt of Eve appear bigger. God himself underlines the difficult relationship between husband and wife in the words of his punishment spoken to Eve (Gn 3:16).

8.2.3 Results of sin - physical and spiritual death

After Adam sinned God said to him (Gn 3:17-19):

Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

The relationship between "Adam" ('āḏām) and the ground or earth he was taken from ('āḏāmāh) is ongoing even after the fall. The ground is cursed because of sinful man so that life becomes difficult for him. When man dies, he returns to the ground, his body being dust and returning to the dust.

One way of speaking of man's death in the Old Testament is that man has to go to the underworld or 'Sheol'⁴⁸ or to the 'pit' of Sheol⁴⁹.

8.2.4 Results of sin - curse on creation

The first curse mentioned in the Holy Bible is the curse on the snake in Gn 3:14:

Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.⁵⁰

48. The Hebrew word שְׁאֵל or שְׁאֵלִי šē'ōl means "underworld", see Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 982-3.

49. The Hebrew word שְׁחַת šaḥat means 1. pit, often dug to trap somebody (Ps 7:15; 9:15; 35:7; 94:13; Prv 26:27; Ez 19:4.8;), 2. pit of Sheol (Job 17:14; 33:18.22.24.28.30; Ps 16:10; 30:9; 49:9!; 55:23; 103:4(!); Is 38:17(!); 51:14; Ez 28:8; Jonah 2:7! See *ibid.*, p. 1001.

50. כִּי עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת אֲרוּרָה אַתָּה מִכָּל-חַיָּה וּמִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה עַל-נִחְנֶנֶה תֵלֵךְ וְעָפָר תֹּאכַל כָּל-יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ :

This seems to be a lasting curse of God which reaches in its effectiveness even into the area of the new heavens and the new earth in Is 65:17-25, esp. 65:25. An effective curse is dangerous. It can be final or almost irreversible. The next mentioned curse is on the ground because of Adam's sin having listened to the voice of his wife and eaten the forbidden fruit (Gn 3:17). The cursed ground makes life very hard for Adam, full of work and sweat, and there will be dangers for a good harvest. The lesson we learn from this is that sin has made life very difficult and still makes it very difficult.

The next curse does not hit the ground but man himself in the person of Cain for murdering his brother Abel who then loses his ability to get anything out of the ground (Gn 4:10-12). He is so cut off from the ground that he becomes a restless fugitive. When Lamech names his son Noah he expresses a prophetic hope (Gn 5:29):

Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands.⁵¹

And indeed God changed the course of history and his dealing with sin of man through the covenant he made with Noah and all flesh (Gn 6:18; 9:9-17). Accepting the burnt offerings from Noah, God promises (Gn 8:21-22):

21 ... I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. 22 While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.

God's one sided covenant of grace with Noah and all flesh put his dealings with men on a new footing, just because he decided to exercise his sovereign divine grace and not curse the ground because of man in the future. Otherwise a universal flood or some similar catastrophe would have erased mankind again and again, because of man's utter sinfulness from the time of birth. But now God's grace would pave the way for the coming of

51.

יִנְחֵמֵנו מִמַּעֲשֵׂנוֹ וּמִמַּעֲצָבוֹן יְיָ יֵינוּ מִן־הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אָרְרָהּ יְהוָה:

the redeemer throughout salvation history in spite of all men being sinners having inherited their sinful human nature from Adam and Eve and in spite of their being totally corrupted by this sinful nature.

8.2.5 Original sin - inherited sinful human nature

We have just seen in Gn 8:21 that

... the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.⁵²

This statement of God in Genesis 8 after the flood has a close parallel in Gn 6:5 before the flood and both form and inclusion around the flood story:

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.⁵³

If we understand that man's heart is evil "from his youth" in Gn 8:21 as "from his birth" (as in Job 31:18 and Ps 71:5-6; Jer 3:4; Ez 16:22.43.60), then the idea that the thoughts of man's heart are evil continually or "all days" in Gn 6:5 is just the same. If all men think and plan evil all the time, then human sinfulness is surely a universal phenomenon according to the Bible, even the first book of the Holy Bible. Ps 51:5 is in agreement with this where David confesses his sinfulness with the following words:

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.⁵⁴

The apostle Paul implies the sinfulness of all men in Rom 5:12 as he does in Rom 3:23 (cf. also Rom 3:9-20).

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.⁵⁵

52. יֵצֵר לֵב הָאָדָם רָע מִנְעֻרָיו
53. וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ וְכָל-יֵצֵר מַחֲשַׁבֶּת לִבּוֹ רָק רָע כָּל-הַיּוֹם:
54. הֵן-בִּעֲוֹן חוֹלְלֵתִי וּבְחַטָּא יִחַמְתֵּנִי אֱמִי:
55. πάντες γὰρ ἡμάρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ

8.2.6 Total depravity – sin affects every part of human nature

As there is time wise no time in the life of man when he is not influenced by the effects of his sinful nature, so there is no area or part of a human being which is not corrupted by the same sinful nature. His body, his soul and his spirit are under the influence of sinful nature and can be defiled (cf. Rom 3:9-20). Therefore they have to be sanctified after someone comes to Christ and starts a holy life in the fear of God (2 Cor 7:1).

8.3 God's Covenants with Man

8.3.1 God's Covenants with Man in the Old Testament

Old Testament salvation history can be understood as a succession of different covenants of God with man. Let us first have an overview of God's covenants and then put an emphasis on the more prominent ones.

1. With Adam (Hos 6:7: "But like Adam they transgressed the covenant");⁵⁶
2. with Noah and his descendants and with all living creatures (Gn 6:18; 9:9.11.12.13; 9:15.16.17; Jer 33:20.25);
3. with all inhabitants of the earth (Is 24:5) or with all nations (Zec 11:10);
4. with Abraham, Isaak and Jacob
 - (a) God's covenant with Abram "between the pieces" to give his seed the promised country based on grace, not on works (Gn 15:18; Neh 9:8);
 - (b) God's covenant with Abraham commanding circumcision and a blameless life (Gn 17:2.4.7; 17:9.10.11; 17:13.14.19; 17:21; Ex 2:24; Ex 6:4.5; Lv 26:42.44.45);

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וְלִמְנָה כְּאָדָם עֲבָרֻ בְּרִית

- (c) God does not forget or break his covenant with the fathers, but keeps it for 1000 generations (Dt 4:31; 7:9; 2 Kgs 13:23; 1 Chr 16:15.17; Ps 105:8.10; 106:45; 111:5.9; Jgs 2:1);

5. with the tribes of Israel

- (a) on Mount Sinai (Ex 19:5; Dt 5:2.3; Jer 31:32);
- (b) in Moab (Dt 29:1; 29:9.12.14; 29:21.25);
- (c) in Shechem (Jo 24:25);
- (d) in Jerusalem with Judah
 - i. under king Joash (2 Kgs 11:4.17; 2 Chr 23:1.3.16);
 - ii. under king Asa (2 Chr 15:12);
 - iii. under king Hezekiah (2 Chr 29:10);
 - iv. under king Josiah (2 Chr 34:30.31.32);
 - v. under the influence of the scribe Ezra (Ezr 10:3).

(e) the future new and eternal covenant after the exile

- i. In Isaiah: Jesus Christ, the prophesied personal servant of the Lord, is in person a covenant for God's people (Is 42:6; 49:8; 54:10; 55:3; Is 59:20-21; 61:1-3.8);
- ii. In Jeremiah: The new covenant is better than the one from Mount Sinai (31:31.32.33; 32:40; 50:5);
- iii. In Ezekiel (16:60.61.62; 20:37; 34:23-25; 37:24-26);
- iv. In the book of the twelve prophets (Hos 2:18-20; Mal 3:1).

6. with Aaron and his seed and with the Levites (Nm 18:19; Neh 13:29; with Phinehas and his seed Nm 25:12.13; the Levites and the covenant: Dt 33:9; Neh 13:29; Mal 2:4.5.8);

7. with David and his seed (2 Sm 23:5 pointing to 7:1-29; Ps 89:3.28.34.39; 132:12; Is 55:3; 61:1-3.8; Jer 33:20.21.25; Ez 34:23-25; 37:24-26; 2 Kgs 11:4.17; 2 Chr 13:5; 21:7; 23:1.3.16).

Among this list of God's covenants with man we want to put a special emphasis on such of God's covenants which are solely based on grace: The

covenant with Noah and all flesh, the covenant with Abram "between the pieces", and the covenant with David and his seed. No sin of man can destroy the determination of God not to send another flood (Gn 8:21). While Abram was asleep, he could not walk himself between the pieces and so agree to any stipulation of this covenant. He was passive. Only "a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces" representing God moving through the pieces and indicating: "If I do not fulfill my promise to Abram, I shall be cut to pieces, I shall cease to be God" (Gn 15:17; Jer 34:18). This of course is impossible. God cannot lie and he will fulfill his promise to give Abram the land (Gn 15:8). In God's covenant with David and his seed, God adopts the son of David who will be heir to the throne. If the son of David sins, God will discipline him, but God's love will not depart from him (2 Sm 7:14-15).

While the covenant with Noah and all flesh lends the framework of God's grace for the further development of all mankind, it makes the other two covenants possible. The rainbow as God's sign of this covenant is mentioned in the description of God's throne presence in Ezekiel and Revelation and shows that God so loves the world and all of mankind, that he overrules the sinfulness of mankind by this covenant of grace (Ez 1:27-28; Rv 4:3). The New Testament starts with the words "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Mt 1:1). Jesus Christ is the legitimate heir of God's promises given to Abraham and to David. Whoever accepts Christ and is clothed with Christ, enters into the treasures of these covenants and the grace of God provided through them (Gal 3:27-29).

The fact that God's promises to Abraham and David will be fulfilled in a new covenant of God with his people at the time of the coming Christ is clearly predicted in the passages about the new covenant in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the book of the twelve prophets. The New Testament claims that Christ fulfills these glorious prophecies (Mt 5:17; 2 Cor 1:20).

Other information about God's covenants

God summons his covenant people for judgment (Ps 50:5.16). A part of the covenant is God's commandment for Israel, not to make a covenant with

the nations of the promised land or with their gods and not to marry those nations (Ex 23:32; 34:12.15; Dt 7:2; Jgs 2:2.20; Mal 2:10-11). The phrase "the book of the covenant" is used for the Sinai covenant (Ex 24:7)⁵⁷ and for the Moab covenant (2 Kgs 23:2.3.21; 2 Chr 34:30.31.32 combined with Dt 31:9.25.26).

The "blood of the covenant" is mentioned in Ex 24:8⁵⁸ where it relates to the blood of the Sinai covenant and in Zec 9:11⁵⁹ where it can be combined with 9:9-11 and 12:9-13:1 and understood as a marvelous and stunning prophecy about the coming Christ and the blood of the new covenant bringing salvation.

The sabbath rest is presented as an eternal covenant in Ex 31:16⁶⁰. God promises the renewal of the covenant, including great and awesome miracles (Ex 34:10).

The tablets with the ten words are seen as foundation of the covenant (Ex 34:27.28; Dt 4:13; Dt 9:9.11.15). Idolatry is forgetting, transgressing or breaking the covenant (Dt 4:23-24; Dt 17:2; Dt 31:16.20; Jo 23:16; 1 Kgs 11:9-11; 19:10.14; 2 Kgs 17:15.35.38; 18:12; Jer 22:9). To take some of the devoted things is transgressing the covenant (Jo 7:11.15). Leviticus speaks of the "the salt of the covenant with your God" (Lv 2:13):

You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.⁶¹

The bread for the tabernacle is seen as an eternal covenant (Lv 24:8).

Every Sabbath day Aaron shall arrange it before the Lord regularly; it is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever.⁶²

57. וַיִּקַּח סֵפֶר הַבְרִיתָה וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנוֹ הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע:

58. וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הַדָּם וַיִּזְרֹק עַל-הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה דָם-הַבְרִיתָה אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם. עַל כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה:

59. גַּם-אַתָּה בְּדָם-בְּרִיתְךָ שְׁלַחְתִּי אֶסִּירֶיךָ מִבּוֹר אֵין מֵיִם בּוֹ:

60. וַשְּׁמְרוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם:

61. וְכָל-קָרְבָּן מִנְחָתְךָ בַּמֶּלַח תִּמְלֹחַ וְלֹא תִשָּׁבֵית מֶלַח בְּרִית אֱלֹהֶיךָ מֵעַל מִנְחָתְךָ עַל כָּל-קָרְבָּנְךָ תִּקְרִיב מֶלַח: ס

62. בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת יַעֲרֹכְנוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תִּמְיד מֵאֵת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִית עוֹלָם:

Within the Old Testament "the ark of the covenant", carried by the priests, or Levites, is of special importance and is mentioned quite often. It is the mobile throne of God who sits over the cherubim (Nm 10:33; Nm 14:44; Dt 10:8; 31:9.25.26; Jo 3:3.6.8; Jo 3:11.14.17; 4:7.9.18; 6:6.8; 8:33).

At the time of Jgs 20:26-27 the ark of the covenant was in Bethel. In 1 Sm 4:3.4.5 the ark is taken from Shiloh to war and then lost and later sent back. The ark is further mentioned in 2 Sm 15:24; 1 Kgs 3:15; 6:19; 8:1.6.21; 1 Chr 15:25.26.28.29; 16:6.37; 17:1; 22:19; 28:2.18; 2 Chr 5:2.7; 6:11. Jeremiah prophecies about a future time when the ark will not be missed any longer as the throne of the Lord and not be made again, but Jerusalem herself will be the throne of the Lord as a center of mankind worshipping the true God (Jer 3:16-17).

One part of the blessings of the covenant is the confirmation or the keeping of the covenant through God (Lv 26:9⁶³; Dt 7:12⁶⁴; Dt 8:18; 1 Kgs 8:23; 2 Chr 6:14; Neh 1:5; 9:32; Ps 103:18; Dn 9:4).

There are also other blessings for keeping the covenant (Ps 25:10.14). Through Isaiah God gives promises even to the eunuchs and to the foreigners who hold fast to God's covenant (Is 56:4.6). It is also possible that those who keep the covenant have to suffer (Ps 44:18).

If Israel breaks God's covenant through disobedience, God is going to punish and discipline them (Lv 26:15⁶⁵). One kind of punishment and vengeance for the covenant could be war, pestilence, being given into the hand of the enemy (Lv 26:25⁶⁶; Jer 11:02.03.06; 11:8.10). If Israel then repents in captivity, God will remember his covenant (Lv 26:42.44.45)⁶⁷ Israel did not keep God's covenant (Ps 78:9-10; 78:37; Ez 16:8.59.60; 44:6-

63. I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm my covenant with you.

64. And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers.

65. ואם־בִּחַקְתִּי תִמְאֲסוּ וְאִם אֶת־מִשְׁפָּטִי תִנְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם לְבַלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתַי לְהַפְרֹכֶם אֶת־בְּרִיתִי:

66. וְהִבֵּאתִי עֲלֵיכֶם חֶרֶב נִקְמָה נִקְמַת־בְּרִית וְנִאֲסַפְתֶּם אֶל־עַרְיֹכֶם וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי דָבָר בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְנִתְתֶּם בְּיַד־אֲוִיב:

67. Lv 26:42 "... then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land."

7; Hos 6:7; 8:1). There are several prayers to God to act according to his covenant, be it with Israel or with David (Ps 74:20; Ps 89:39ff; Jer 14:21). In the book of Daniel the subject of the covenant is an important one for the end times (Dn 9:27; 11:22.28.30.32).

8.3.2 God's Covenants with Man in the New Testament

Let us have an overview of God's covenants⁶⁸ mentioned in the New Testament.

1. Covenants with Abraham:

- (a) God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision (Acts 7:8; cf. Gn 17:9-14).
- (b) The new covenant in Christ is a fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Abraham. The coming of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ is God's work "to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham" (Luke 1:72-73). God's covenant promise to Abraham "And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Acts 3:25; cf. Gn 12:3; 22:18) is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

2. Covenants with Israel:

- (a) The covenants belong to the Israelites (Rom 9:4) and the non-Israelites were "separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:11-12).
- (b) The covenant of Sinai is represented in Gal 4:24-26 by the slave Hagar and "is bearing children for slavery". This covenant stands in contrast to the covenant of the heavenly Jerusalem which is represented by the free Sarah whose son Isaac was

68. We analyze here the instances of the Greek word for covenant in the New Testament: διαθήκη *diathēkē*.

born according to God's promise and to inherit God's promise (Gal 4:30). The reading of the old covenant implies the existence of the new covenant (2 Cor 3:14). Heb 8:9 also speaks of the old covenant quoting the words of Jer 31:32. This covenant was not inaugurated without blood (Heb 9:18-22). This covenant is spoken of as a testament in Heb 9:20. Related to this covenant is also the mentioning of "the ark of the covenant"⁶⁹ and "the tablets of the covenant" in Heb 9:4.

- (c) The new covenant with a future salvation for Israel: The section in Rom 11:25-29 is pointing to the new covenant of Jer 31:31-34. According to Heb 9:15 the Lord's "death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant".

3. The new covenant for believers in Christ from Israel and all nations.

- (a) Jesus teaches in his words about the Lord's supper that the new covenant is inaugurated through his death (Mt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25).
- (b) Paul understands himself as a servant of this new covenant in the power of the Holy Spirit who makes people spiritually alive (2 Cor 3:6). Paul teaches that the blessings that God had promised to give to all nations through the seed of Abraham are now freely given to all by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:15.17; 4:24-26).
- (c) The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews sees Jesus as "the guarantor of a better covenant" (Heb 7:22). "Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises (Heb 8:6). The writer proves this by quoting Jer 31:31-34 in Heb 8:8-12 since God there promised a better covenant (cf. Heb 10:16). "In speaking of a new covenant" God makes the first one old (Heb 8:13).

69. Compare the mentioning of the heavenly original of the earthly ark in Rv 11:19.

Christ "is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance", redeemed "from the transgressions committed under the first covenant" (9:15). The new covenant is seen as a testament, a will (9:16-17). The blood of Jesus is the blood of the new covenant (10:29) or "the blood of the eternal covenant" (13:20) which "speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (12:24).

The subject of God's covenants is wonderful. It proclaims God's faithfulness. Over thousands of years God pursues his plans and fulfills his promises. The claim of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ came to fulfill God's promises to the fathers and his covenants with them. The new covenant is the consummation of salvation history and brings eternal salvation by the blood of Jesus Christ, his resurrection, his rule and intercession sitting at the right hand of God the Father. Jesus Christ is the mediator of this new covenant. He grants rich spiritual blessings to believers out of Israel and all nations.

Chapter 9

The Person of Jesus Christ (Christology)

9.1 Jesus as the Promised Seed.

The New Testament starts in Mt 1:1 like this:

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David,
the son of Abraham.

In his genealogy in the first chapter the apostle Matthew shows that the prophecies about the coming of Jesus go way back into salvation history, to promises of God given to David and to Abraham. Indeed we can trace those promises even further back to God's words spoken right after Adam's and Eve's falling into sin.

9.1.1 The seed of the women

The seed of the woman (Gn 3:15) is understood by some New Testament passages as the first hint of the coming Savior who will crush the serpent (Rv 12:1-17; Rom 16:20; Lk 10:17-20). In the catastrophe of the flood God saves Noah and his family. It becomes evident that the promised line goes through his son Shem to Abram (Gn 9:25-27; 11:10-27). We can see the

disastrous effects of sin and the accompanying curse throughout Gn 3-11, it becomes clear that there is a need for a power greater than sin and curses to redeem mankind.

9.1.2 The seed of Abraham

The source for this saving divine power is pointed out when we come in sacred history to the life of Abram. God reveals to Abram in Gn 12:1-4 that Abram will be a source of blessing for all families of the earth if he follows faithfully God's leading to an unknown country. This presupposes a power of blessing which is stronger than the power of sin and sin-related curses. It is clear that the subject is salvation. This becomes even more evident in Gn 15:5-6 where God reveals two great truths: First, the faith of Abram is the way of becoming justified before God. Second, Abram will be the father of innumerable descendants. The covenant of Gn 15:7-21 which guarantees the land to Abram is of utmost importance because it is a covenant of grace with no stipulation for the party of the deep sleeping Abram. All promises depend only on God's power and faithfulness. In further developments it becomes evident that God will use Abraham's seed through Isaac to bless all nations (22:18; 17:4-8.19-21; 26:2-5.24). From Isaac the promise continues through Jacob (25:23; 28:3-4; 28:13-15; 32:28; 35:10-12; 46:3-4). Together with the promises of blessings for all nations through the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob God also promised that future kings would come from Abraham and Sarah (Gn 17:6.16) and Jacob (35:11). The picture we get from this is that God will make Abraham and Isaac and Jacob to a nation and give this nation a country of their own with kings of their own. Somehow God will use the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to give blessings to all nations. While all sons of Jacob will be the beneficiaries of the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, according to the blessing of Jacob in Gn 49:10 only Judah has received a special promise of rulership.

One of the prophecies of Balaam points to a mighty king coming out of Israel in the last days (Nm 24:17). This prophecy is in agreement with God's promises of kings in Genesis. His prophecy of the innumerable number of Israel (Nm 23:10 repeats similar predictions in Genesis. Another prophecy

of his in Nm 24:5.9 reminds us of Gn 12:3:

5 How lovely are your tents, O Jacob,
 your encampments, O Israel! ...
 9 He crouched, he lay down like a lion
 and like a lioness; who will rouse him up?
 Blessed are those who bless you,
 and cursed are those who curse you.”

9.1.3 **The seed of David**

In the historical writings we see some of the prophecies of the Torah fulfilled. In Joshua, Israel gets possession of the promised land. With Saul, Israel gets the first king (1 Sm 10:1.17-26). He is not from Judah but from the tribe of Benjamin (1 Sm 10:20). Then God rejected Saul because of his disobedience (1 Sm 13:13-14; 15:22-29). In the books of Samuel one of the key subjects is God's choosing and rejecting of office holders or places. God rejects Shiloh in 1 Sm 1-4 and chooses Jerusalem in 2 Sm 6 and 2 Sm 24 (compare Ps 78:59-72). God rejects the house of Eli from the priesthood in 1 Sm 2-4 (compare 1 Kgs 2:27). God rejects Saul and chooses David instead (1 Sm 16:1-13) and even his house after him for ever (2 Sm 7). The covenant of God with David in 2 Sm 7 (especially 7:11-16) is one of the great steps forward in the progressive revelation of God:

11 ... Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, 15 but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. 16 And your house and your kingdom

shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.

The context shows us David as he wants to build a worthy temple for the ark of God (2 Sm 7:1-3). The answer of God is: "Would you build me a house to dwell in? ... the Lord will make you a house" (7:5.11). The same Hebrew word "house" is used for houses to live in made of stone and for house in the sense of family. David wanted to build a house of stone for the ark of the covenant. God will build a house for David in the sense of a dynasty, a royal family whose influence will never end. God promises to adopt one son of David in each generation to be the chosen king and at the same time a "son of God" with God as his caring and educating father. The key of God's promise is that the 'house' will last forever. God's promise in 2 Sm 7 is one-sided as his covenant with Abraham was in Gn 15, solely based on God's grace. Even if the sons of David sin, God's grace will not depart from them! These two grace-based covenants of God with Abraham and with David make the starting phrase of the New Testament (Mt 1:1) so important:

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David,
the son of Abraham.

These two grace-based covenants guarantee the success of God's salvation plan in spite of human sinfulness. Saul was rejected because of his sin. God's promise to David can not be endangered by the sins of the different sons of David because God has promised so. What God is going to do to bring this about, is left open for future fulfillment. Even if the word covenant is not used in 2 Sm 7, it is used in 2 Sm 23:3-7 where David's last words are spoken and where he points back to God's promise of 2 Sm 7.

3 The God of Israel has spoken;
the Rock of Israel has said to me:
When one rules justly over men,
ruling in the fear of God,
4 he dawns on them like the morning light,
like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning,

like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.

5 For does not my house stand so with God?

For he has made with me an everlasting covenant,
ordered in all things and secure.

For will he not cause to prosper
all my help and my desire?

6 But worthless men are all like thorns that are thrown away,
for they cannot be taken with the hand;

7 but the man who touches them
arms himself with iron and the shaft of a spear,
and they are utterly consumed with fire."

The righteous ruler in the fear of God (23:3) is the promised son of David who will be like the sunshine furthering the fruitful growth of the land after the rain (23:4), a blessing for the whole country. In contrast to this stand the worthless men who are like thorns and end up in the fire (23:6-7). The center of God's quoted word here is 23:5: David's house stands firm with God because God has made (in 2 Sm 7) an everlasting covenant with him. "For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?"¹ "All my help and desire" can be combined to mean "all my desired help" or "all my desired salvation". While dying, David puts forward a question: "Will God not cause all my desired salvation to prosper?" It is a question. But this dying man is full of the Spirit (23:2). The answer is a definite "Yes!". The picture implied in "cause to prosper" is that of a plant. Later prophecies of the "branch" or "sprout" of David are built upon these last words of David.² God will bring the promised blessings and salvation through the seed of Abraham and the son of David to God's people and the world's nations. The first fulfillment of the son of David who will build a house for God (2 Sm 7:13) is of course Solomon. But later prophecies which reflect on this covenant of God state that the coming Messiah will also be a builder of God's temple or dwelling-place. Because of the sins of Solomon the power over most tribes of Israel is taken away from the house of David and given

1. כִּי־יִשְׁעִי וְכִלְחָפֶיךָ כִּי־לֹא יִצְמָחָהּ :

2. In Hebrew sprout or branch is *šemah* שֵׁמָח. Relevant prophetic texts are Isa 4:2; Jer 23:5-6; 33:14-17; Zec 3:8-9; 6:9-15.

over to Jeroboam the new king of northern Israel, but not for ever (1 Kgs 11:11-13; 11:29-39; 12:20). The further development in the book of Kings is catastrophic. First Northern Israel is destroyed and deported because of the sins of the inhabitants (2 Kgs 17). Then in 2 Kgs 25 Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed and the throne of David becomes vacant because of the sins of the Jews. Only at the end there is a small hopeful note that God's grace is still there even in exile (2 Kgs 25,27-30).

When we look at the books of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Daniel and the book of the twelve prophets from Hosea to Malachi we find many prophecies about the coming son of David as Messiah (e.g. Amos 9:11-12); Hosea 3:5).

The prophet Isaiah proclaims in 7:14 the sign of Immanuel who will be born of a virgin.³

In Is 8:8-10 this Immanuel as the Lord of Judah is the reason why the armies of the enemies which have flooded Judah "even to the neck" will not completely drown Judah. They will not accomplish their purposes but will be stopped miraculously by "God is with us" (= Immanuel).

Then further development reaches a climax in Is 9, 10 and 11. In Is 9:6-7 the Lord of Judah and Israel is seen as a child on the throne of David with wonderful names given to him:

6 For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.⁴
7 Of the increase of his government and of peace

3. The Hebrew word translated here with "virgin" is הַמְּאֵלְמָה *hā-'almāh*. Besides Isa 7:14 it is used in the following verses in the Old Testament: In Gn 24:43; Ex 2:8; Ps 68:25; Prv 30:19; Song 1:3; 6:8. None of the seven texts presents a woman which is clearly married and no longer a virgin. Those who translate *hā-'almāh* with "a young woman" have no clear text to present that *hā-'almāh* was used of a married young woman. The LXX uses παρθένος *parthēnōs* denoting a virgin and Matthew has used this translation.

4. יְקָרָא שְׁמוֹ פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ אֵל גִּבּוֹר אֲבִיעֵד שֶׁר־שְׁלֹם:

there will be no end,
 on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
 to establish it and to uphold it
 with justice and with righteousness
 from this time forth and forevermore.
 The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

These names present the child as a unique human personality without any parallel within Old Testament history. No king has ruled forever as this child on the throne of David will do. No king like this has ruled forever and in peace. The source of the everlasting kingdom is justice and righteousness. There was never a kingdom with these qualities that lasted forever. The names of the child seem to be grouped into four titles with two words each. For our subject the name "Mighty God" ('ēl gibbôr) is of special interest. These two words without any definite article are used only twice like this together in the whole of the Old Testament, once in Is 9:6 as part of the names of the child and the second time in Is 10:20-21)⁵

Is 10:20 speaks of the remnant of Israel trusting the Lord in truth. 10:21 presents this as the return of this remnant to "the mighty God" ('ēl gibbôr) where the same name is used for God which had been used as part of the names of the coming Messiah in Is 9:6. This can clearly be understood as a hint to the divinity of the coming Messiah. This would explain that he can stay and rule forever in peace.

In 11:1-5 we see the son of David again. Here we get deeper insight into the question how the kingdom of this son of David will be upheld "with justice and with righteousness", it is by the power of the Holy Spirit upon him. If the son of David is divine, and the "zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this" and the Holy Spirit upon the child has his share in the success of the messianic kingdom, then we can say that this kingdom of God is prophesied as a kingdom of the Trinity.

The man who speaks in Is 48:16 is sent by the Lord God and his Spirit.⁶

5. שָׂאֵר יְשׁוּב שְׂאֵר יַעֲקֹב אֵל-גִּבּוֹר : 5.

6. The Spirit is God in Isaiah (30:1). He has emotions (63:10) and so much intelligence that nobody can dare to give him counsel (40:13). The fact that he has a will is evident from his sending someone to fulfill a mission in this verse (48:16). Will,

The best person in the context of this verse to identify the speaker with is the special servant of the Lord who is also presented in Is 42:1-12; 49:1-13; 50:4-11 and 52:13-53:12.⁷ Compare especially 42:1 where the Spirit of the Lord is on the servant of the Lord in a way very similar to Is 11:1ff with a similar effect of bringing righteousness to the nations of the world.

The servant of the Lord in the given passages and the Davidic Messiah in Is 7-12 have so many parallels that Is 55:3-4 can rightly be understood as an identification of both. He is for example a light to the nations in 42:6 and 49:6 as the son of David is a light in 9:2.6.

Another "trinitarian" section in Isaiah is the famous 61:1 which was later proclaimed by Jesus as fulfilled in the synagogue in Nazareth (Lk 4:18-19):

1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

A very interesting parallel to the Immanuel and Son of David prophecies in Is 7:14; 8:8-10; 9:6-7; 11:1-10 is found in Mi 5:2-5. The fact that the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem (Mi 5:2) and not in the palace of a Davidic king in Jerusalem shows that the family of David will lose Jerusalem and the palace and the power as is also presupposed in Is 11:1 under the picture of the tree of Jesse cut down and the shoot of the Messiah coming forth out of the reduced stump.

The turning point for Israel is the birth of the Messiah out of a woman in labor in Mi 5:3 which resembles Is 7:14. The Messiah is the peace of Israel in person in Mi 5:5 and the Prince of Peace in Is 9:6. Both prophets, Micah and Isaiah, were working at the same time and have quite a few points in common.

emotions and intelligence are understood as signs of a personality. So we can say that the Spirit of God is viewed as a person in Isaiah.

7. Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 228.

In the Old Testament there is a series of prophetic passages about a "branch" from David which goes back to the last words of David where he confessed his hope that God would act according to his covenant (2 Sm 7:11-16) with him to "cause to prosper all my help and my desire" (2 Sm 23:5).⁸ There are texts of this series after Isaiah which are clearly messianic (Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zec 3:8; 6:12). Accordingly it is also possible to understand "the branch of the Lord" in Is 4:2 as messianic (4:2-4).

Daniel 7:9-10.13-14.27 is another important prophecy about God's coming kingdom and the messianic king that goes with it:

9 As I looked, thrones were placed,
and the Ancient of days took his seat;
his clothing was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames;
its wheels were burning fire.
10 A stream of fire issued
and came out from before him;
a thousand thousands served him,
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him;
the court sat in judgment,
and the books were opened...
13 I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
14 And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,

8. כִּי-כֹל-יִשְׁעֵי וְכָל-חַפְצֵי כִּי-לֹא יִצְמִיחַ: .8.

and his kingdom one
 that shall not be destroyed...
 27 And the kingdom and the dominion
 and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven
 shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High;
 their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom,
 and all dominions shall serve and obey them.'

In Dn 7 there are four beasts which represent four kingdoms of this world coming one after the other (Dn 7:17). The last is the most terrible one, making war with the saints and prevailing over them (7:7.21) until God finishes it in his judgment (7:11).

On the backdrop of those four beasts which represent four kingdoms arising "out of the earth" (7:17), the coming of "one like a son of man" with "the clouds of heaven" into the presence of "the Ancient of Days" is a total contrast. It is the kingdom of God and of heaven in contrast to the kingdoms of this world.

The human outlook of God's kingdom stands in contrast to the beastly way of the kingdoms of this world. In the interpretation the "one like a son of man" represents "the people of the saints of the Most High". But as the four beasts represent four kings and four kingdoms, so the "one like a son of man" is not only to be identified with the "people of the saints", but also as their king.

From the rest of the Old Testament prophecies, this has to be the Messiah, the son of David. In Dn 9:1-2 we see Daniel studying the book of the prophet Jeremiah who also teaches about the coming Messiah of the house of David (Jer 23:5-6). The nearest parallel of Dn 7:13-14 with its emphasis on the everlasting kingdom would be Is 9:6-7. Surely Daniel himself had understood this vision as pointing to the coming of the Messiah to receive the kingdom forever.

Daniel was coming, as Dn 1 and his reading of the prophet Jeremiah shows, from the tradition of the law and the prophets as far as they existed. The kingdom of God in Dn 2 and 7 has to be understood on the backdrop of that prophetic tradition, and that tradition sees the Messiah as the king of

the kingdom of heaven.⁹

Jesus Christ often uses the name "son of man" to talk about himself in the gospels, and people tend to think that this is a name for Christ which more points to his humble state as a human being. But Jesus pointed to Dn 7:13 and Ps 110:1 when he stood before the Sanhedrin (Mt 26:63-64):

63 But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." 64 Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The claim to be the "Son of Man" of Daniel was the answer of Jesus to the question whether he is the Christ, the Son of God. It is a "Yes!" and a very strong one, so strong that it was regarded as blasphemy and led to his condemnation to death. In a way the title "Son of Man" understood on the backdrop of Dn 7:13-14 is the most exalted title for the coming Christ, because in Dn 7 the son of man reaches the very presence of God and receives dominion over the whole world and that forever. If the Sanhedrin had believed that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, then his claim would not have been seen as blasphemy. But they rejected his claim and handed him the death sentence. Dn 7:13-14 is another of those texts which present the coming Messiah very close to the divine.

The other text which Jesus pointed to, does exactly the same (Ps 110:1.4):

A Psalm of David.

1 The Lord says to my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand,¹⁰

until I make your enemies your footstool."

... 4 The Lord has sworn

and will not change his mind,

"You are a priest forever

after the order of Melchizedek."

9. Keil, Ezekiel, Daniel, p. 234-5.

10. נָאֵם יְהוָה לְאֶדְנִי שֵׁב לְיְמִינִי.

This Psalm is attributed to David, who speaks of God as the Lord talking to "my Lord" which is, of course, a great surprise. David is the king of Israel and so the human Lord of the country. There is no other human lord over him at the time he received this Psalm and vision from the Lord. But he acknowledges someone as "his Lord" who is distinct from God. If someone speaks of "his Lord", he acknowledges this person as his owner or ruler who guides his life. David is king and knows a person besides God who rules and guides him.

This person is invited by God to sit at His right hand until all his enemies are defeated and in submission to him. He seems to be appointed to rule the whole earth from Zion. At the same time he will be a priest forever "after the order of Melchizedek". If he is a priest forever, he also will be a king forever.

If we combine Is 9:6-7 and Dn 7:13-14 with Psalm 110 we have three witnesses of the coming Messiah who is going to rule Israel and the world forever. In all three texts there are elements which present the Messiah close to the divine.¹¹

Psalm 1 and 2 introduce the book of Psalms with two great gifts of God for his people and the world, the word of God in Ps 1 and the Messiah of God in Ps 2. According to Psalm 2, God will implement his rule through his Messiah from Zion in the whole world even if the nations and rulers of the world reject him.

This Psalm is taken up as a Psalm of David in the prayer of the persecuted church in Acts 4:25-28 and understood to point to Jesus's crucifixion by Israel's leaders and the Gentiles represented in the Roman government.

Like his contemporary Jeremiah the prophet Ezekiel also has a Messianic hope for the future when God will restore and unite Israel under the Davidic Messiah (Ez 34:23-24; 37:24-25).

Mal 3:1 speaks of the coming of the Lord:

1 "Behold, I send my messenger

11. See also the use Jesus made of Ps 110:1 in Matthew 22:41-46 where he is proven to be a teacher par excellence with the result that no one dared "to ask him any more questions." Compare also Psalm 45:6-7 and its use in Heb 1:8

and he will prepare the way before me.¹²
 And the Lord whom you seek
 will suddenly come to his temple;
 and the messenger of the covenant
 in whom you delight, behold, he is coming,¹³
 says the Lord of hosts.

The first mentioned messenger who comes to prepare the way seems to be Elijah according to 4:5-6 (and then John the Baptist according to Mt 11:10). The "Lord who comes to his temple" is God, because it is "His" temple. But at the same time he is called "the messenger of the covenant" in the parallelism. When we think of the New Testament fulfillment, the one is Elijah, namely John the Baptist, and the other is Jesus Christ (Mt 3:3.11-12).

9.2 The Humanity of Christ

9.2.1 Virgin Birth

Biblical testimony for the virgin birth.

We have seen in the section¹⁴ about the Christ as the seed of David sub-section 9.1.3 that Isaiah proclaims in 7:14 the sign of Immanuel who will be born of a virgin and who can be identified with the help of Is 8:8-10, 9:6-7, 10:20 and 11:1-2 as the coming Christ. His contemporary prophet Micah also binds the hope of the time of salvation to a woman giving birth to the Christ in Bethlehem (Mi 5:2-3). When Micah says that the origin of the coming Christ goes way back, "is from of old, from ancient days", he might mean that old prophecies have spoken of the coming savior and bringer of peace. See for example the first of these prophecies about the seed of the woman (Gn 3:15; Gal 4:4-5).

12. הִנְנִי שְׁלַחַ מַלְאָכִי וַפְתֹּחַ דֶּרֶךְ לִפְנֵי

13. וּפְתָאֵם יָבוֹא אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לְהַאֲדֹן אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם מִבְּקָשִׁים

וּמִלְאָךְ הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם תִּפְצִים הַגֹּדֶלָא

14. For this section about the humanity of Christ we follow the line of argument of Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 529-543.

The evangelist Matthew (Mt 1:18-25) tells us that the prophecy of Is 7:14 has been fulfilled in Jesus and that the name of Jesus resembles the meaning of Immanuel:

20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

Matthew conveys the perspective of Joseph how he got to know about the virgin birth of Jesus through the angel. Luke basically agrees with the testimony of Matthew but he gives the perspective of Mary and what the angel told her (Lk 1:30-35):

30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy - the Son of God.

In Luke Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born by the virgin Mary and therefore he is "holy" and "the Son of God". We shall discuss the title Son of God later in detail. We can see that both, Matthew and Luke combine the teaching of the virgin birth with texts of Isaiah, namely Is 7:14

(Mt 1:23) and Is 9:7 (Lk 1:32). This confirms our use of texts in Is 7-12 to identify the child Immanuel of Is 7:14 as the coming Christ within biblical theology. Within Luke the wording of Lk 3:23 also presupposes the virgin birth saying that people supposed that Jesus was the son of Joseph.

Theological importance of the virgin birth.

The virgin birth is part of the biblical teaching of the ultimate divine miracle, the incarnation: God became man. This is the greatest miracle. Deity and humanity are united in one person. The birth of Jesus by the virgin Mary after Jesus had been conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit made this miracle possible. As we have seen from Lk 1:35, the virgin birth makes Jesus also holy in a special sense. The uniting of the holy divine nature and the human nature in the person of Jesus results in a man who is sinless and did never sin. The miracle of the virgin birth made it possible that Jesus was born without inherited sin.

9.2.2 Human Weaknesses and Limitations

Jesus had a human body.

The newborn baby Jesus was looking just like other babies (Lk 2:7 and he had to grow and to go through the different phases of childhood just like other children (Lk 2:52). He got tired (Jn 4:6) and thirsty (Jn 19:28) and hungry (Mt 4:2) as we do. After he had been beaten and tortured, he got so weak that Simon of Cyrene had to carry the cross for him (Lk 23:26). After Jesus had risen from the dead, he still could show his human hands and feet to his disciples so that they could recognize him (Lk 24:39). He even ate before their eyes (Lk 24:42-43). In his resurrected human body he went up to heaven while they were watching him (Lk 24:50-51; Acts 1:9).

Jesus had a human mind.

Luke helps us to see that Jesus had a truly human mind and had to live and grow through the different stages of the development of a human child until becoming an adult (Lk 2:52):

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.¹⁵

This learning process of Jesus continued until the last day of his life and his suffering was the climax of all (Heb 5:8

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.¹⁶

When Jesus says that no one knows when the day of the coming of the Son of Man will be, "not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mk 13:32), we have to understand this according to the humanity of Jesus. According to the humanity of Jesus, Jesus could die. He could not die according to his deity. He is from eternity to eternity. According to his humanity it was possible that he did not know the day of his second coming. According to his deity he knows everything.¹⁷

Jesus had a human soul and human emotions.

Jn 12:27; 13:21; Mt 26:38; 8:10; Jn 11:35; Heb 5:7-9; 4:15.

His people saw Jesus only as a man.

When Jesus went into his hometown Nazareth and preached there, the people did not really accept him, because they saw him only as "the carpenter's son", the son of Mary and the brother of "James and Joseph and Simon and Judas" and of "all his sisters" living with them in Nazareth (Mt 13:53-58). His own brothers did not believe in him before his crucifixion and resurrection (Jn 7:5). Once "his own" even wanted to put him into a kind of arrest to (Mk 3:20-21):

15. Καὶ Ἰησοῦς προέκοπτεν σοφίᾳ καὶ ἡλικίᾳ καὶ χάριτι παρὰ θεῷ καὶ ἀνθρώποις.

16. καίπερ ὢν υἱός, ἔμαθεν ἀφ' ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν ὑπακοήν

17. So with Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 561.

20 Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. 21 And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."¹⁸

In this last section we can exclude the mother of Jesus Mary, because she knew about the special calling of her son from God's angels and messengers like Simeon and Anna and the shepherds (Lk 1-2). But Mk 3:20-21 agree with John 7:5 that Jesus had people in his own family who did not believe in him. After the resurrection we find them in the first church as believers (Acts 1:14; 1 Cor 15:7).

9.2.3 Sinlessness

Lk 2:40 tells us that God's special grace guided Jesus throughout his childhood and made him grow strong and in wisdom. The devil tempted Jesus, but without success (Lk 4:13). Jesus could challenge his contemporaries (Jn 8:46):

Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?¹⁹

Because of his sinlessness (Jn 8:29) Jesus is the light of the world freeing those who abide in his word from darkness (8:12) and from the slavery of sin (Jn 8:31-36; 15:10). With regard to the accusations before Pilate, the New Testament states that Jesus was without guilt (Jn 18:38). Jesus "in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15; cf. 2:18; 7:26; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pt 1:19; 2:22; 1 Jn 3:5; Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13).

Jesus is called holy (Acts 2:27; 3:14; 4:30; 13:35) and righteous (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 1 Pt 3:18; 1 Jn 2:1). The perfect obedience of Jesus Christ

18. καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐξηλθόν κρατῆσαι αὐτόν, ἔλεγον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη.

19. τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐλέγχει με περὶ ἁμαρτίας; εἰ ἀλήθειαν λέγω, διὰ τί ὑμεῖς οὐ πιστεύετε μοι;

towards the Father even in his suffering became a source of salvation for sinners (Heb 5:7-9; Rom 5:18-19; Heb 2:17-18).

The circumstance that God send "his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin"²⁰ has not to be understood in the sense that Jesus himself had sin in his flesh, but that his flesh, his body was like the body of sinful man, but at the same time without sin (Rom 8:3). That God send Jesus "for sin"²¹ means that God send him "as a sin offering".

9.2.4 What positive effects has the full humanity of Christ?

His representative obedience brings salvation to mankind.

Paul portrays Jesus Christ as the last Adam in comparison to the first Adam (1 Cor 15:45-47. Both represent all of mankind. Therefore all die because of the sin of the first Adam who represented all of his children in his disobedience. In Christ all are made righteous and alive, because all who belong to him are represented in his obedience and are made righteous in Christ (Rom 5:18-19; 1 Cor 15:22).

The human high priest Jesus has destroyed the devil becoming an atoning sacrifice for sins in his death.

Heb 2:14-18:

14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the

20. ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας

21. περὶ ἁμαρτίας

people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

The human high priest Jesus can sympathize with us.

The same section we have just quoted implies this idea in Heb 2:17-18. One great profit of the incarnation of the Word of God is that Jesus Christ as a high priest is merciful and sympathizes with us human beings knowing exactly how we feel (Heb 4:15).

The man Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and man.

In 1 Tm 2:1-7 the apostle Paul encourages believers to pray for all men, because God wants to save all men through the proclamation of the gospel to all nations as through the apostle Paul, for Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and men (1 Tm 2:5-6):

5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,²² 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

Jesus as king of the earth fulfills God's original purpose for man to rule over creation.

As we have seen before, God made man the ruler of the earth in Gn 1:26-28. The crucified and risen Christ claims to be the ruler of the earth (Mt 28:18-20) as has also been prophesied about the coming Christ in Isaiah 11:1-10 who would bring peace to the whole earth (cf. Rom 8:17-23).

The man Jesus is our master and we are his disciples.

Jesus is the role model for all true Christians ((1 Jn 2:6; 3:2-3; 2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29; 1 Pt 2:21; Heb 12:2-3; Phil 3:10; 1 Pt 3:17-18; 4:1).

22. εἷς γὰρ θεός, εἷς καὶ μεσίτης θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων ἄνθρωπος Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς,

Christ's resurrected human body is the pattern for our future bodies.

Christ as the firstborn of the dead (Col 1:18; cf. 1 Cor 15:23) gives us a glimpse of what our glorious bodies will be like (Phil 3:20-21; 1 Cor 15:42-44,49).

9.2.5 The humanity of Jesus will remain forever.

The resurrection narratives make it abundantly clear that the body of Jesus was still human and even resembled his crucified body so far that the marks of his crucifixion were still visible (Jn 20:25-27; Lk 24:39-42; cf. Rv 5:6).

We can assume that normally there will be no stains of torture or accidents on the glorious bodies of the resurrected. If the resurrection body of Christ was still recognizable as a body which had been crucified, there will be a deeper divine purpose in this. Perhaps God wants us to see and remember for ever what price and love brought us into his presence (Rv 7:14).

The apostles were witnesses to the fact that Jesus went into heaven in his resurrected human body (Acts 1:11). Stephen witnessed "the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). Christ revealed himself from heaven to Paul as well (Acts 9:5; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8). The glory of Christ as the son of man is also seen by John in Rv 1:13-17).

9.3 The Deity of Christ

9.3.1 Statements of Scripture that show that Jesus Christ is God.

Christ is called “God” (θεός theōs).

The Word that was in the beginning and with God was also God²³ (Jn 1:1; cf. 1:18). The answer of the apostle Thomas to the appearance of the risen Christ is: "My Lord and my God!"²⁴ (Jn 20:28). The apostle Paul speaks of his desire for the salvation of the Israelites and says (Rom 9:5):

To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.²⁵

According to Paul one aspect of a just and godly life is that we are "waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ"²⁶ (Tit 2:13). Heb 1:8 quotes Ps 45:6 and applies it with the title "God" to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In the first verse of his second letter Peter speaks of "the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (1:1). In total agreement with this New Testament use of God for Christ is the marvelous prediction of the coming Christ to be called "Mighty God" in Is 9:6 (cf. Is 10:21).

Christ is called “Lord” (κύριος kyriōs).

Filled with the Holy Spirit Elizabeth speaks of Mary as "the mother of my Lord" (Lk 1:43). In talking to the shepherds the army of the Lord acknowledges the new born baby Jesus as "Savior", "Christ" and "Lord" (Lk 2:11).

23. For this section about the deity of Christ we follow the line of argument of Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 543-554.

24. Ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου.

25. ὧν οἱ πατέρες, καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων, θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας ἀμήν.

26. προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

If according to Mt 3:3 John's call to repentance is a fulfillment of the commandment in Is 40:3 to prepare "the way of the Lord", then it is implied that Jesus, the person coming after John, the one mightier than John (Mt 3:11), is the Lord, the God of Israel.

In the same way Jesus uses Ps 110:1 in Mt 22:44 pointing out that according to this prophecy of the king David the coming Christ is the Lord even of David and much greater than this earthly king, ruling seated at the right hand of God the Father until his enemies are overcome.

The apostle Paul says that "for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist"²⁷ (1 Cor 8:6). In the context of the use of the spiritual gifts, the apostle Paul states that a person speaking under the influence of a spirit can only confess "Jesus is Lord" if this is the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3). But if somebody curses Jesus speaking under the influence of a spirit, then this spirit can not be the Holy Spirit of God.

Heb 1:10-12 quotes Ps 102:25-27 and applies it with the title "Lord" to the Son of God. When Jesus comes on his white horse riding into the battle which finishes this world, he has a name written on him "King of kings and Lord of lords"²⁸ (Rv 19:16; cf. 17:14). In 1 Tm 6:15 a very similar phrase is used for God the Father.²⁹ and in Dt 10:17 for God the Lord.

Of special significance are the places in the New Testament where Jesus is called Lord in a way that Old Testament verses are quoted or alluded to because that shows that the author in question identifies Jesus as God the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jakob. Paul says, "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom 10:9). He makes it clear in the context that the confession is the confession of prayer and the Lord is the Lord of all, the God of Israel (Rom 10:12-13) quoting Joel 2:32).

The same is true for the confession of all that Jesus is Lord in Phil 2:9-11

27. ἀλλ ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν, καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ.

28. Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ κύριος κυρίων.

29. ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων καὶ κύριος τῶν κυριευόντων

if it is compared to Is 45:23-24

Phil 2:9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Is 45:23 By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: 'To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.' 24 Only in the Lord, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength; to him shall come and be ashamed all who were incensed against him.

With the background of Is 45:23-24 the highest name in Phil 2:9-11 is the name of Lord God who is worthy to be worshiped. Both texts taken together show the determination of God that all will have to acknowledge the deity of Jesus Christ the Lord.

"I am" (ἐγὼ εἰμί ἔγω ἔimi) is used for Christ in a way that points to Ex 3:14 et al.

When Jesus says in Jn 8:58 "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am", the people who hear him feel so provoked that they want to stone him to death. They understood that this was an enormous claim and they rejected it. In the same chapter Jesus explains that the way of salvation from sins is to believe that "I am" (Jn 8:24):

I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am (he) you will die in your sins.³⁰

I have put the "he" of "I am (he)" in brackets because it is not in the Greek. It sounds awkward in English to say "that I am" without anything further said, so most translations will add something like "he", but the context does

30. εἶπον οὖν ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν• ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ πιστεύσητε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι, ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν.

not really tell us who or what "he" would be. If we combine 8:58 and 8:24 to understand both as hints to the deity of Jesus Christ who "is" before Abraham came into existence, then a line opens up that goes back to Ex 3:14:

13 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"³¹

The "I am..." words in John are related to this line of thought, because Jesus identifies himself with gifts from God to his believing disciples which are divine (bread of eternal life 6:35.51; light of eternal life 8:12; 9:5; the door to salvation and eternal life 10:7.9; the good shepherd laying down his life for the sheep and taking it up again and uniting the people of God out of Israel and out of all the nations and being one with the Father 10:11-17.30; the resurrection and the life 11:25-26; the way, and the truth, and the life leading to the Father 14:6; the true vine being the life source of the connected believers having chosen them to bear fruit 15:1.5.16; the king born to bear witness to the truth 18:37).

Another episode in John 18:4-9 shows the power of the "I am" of Jesus. They only could take him captive, because he handed himself over to them saving his disciples giving them time to flee.

4 Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" 5 They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "**I am** he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. 6 When Jesus said to them, "**I am** he," they drew back and fell to the ground. 7 So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." 8 Jesus answered, "I told

31. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲהִיָּה שְׁלַחֲנִי
אֲלֵיכֶם:

LXX: καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Μωϋσῆν Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν· καὶ εἶπεν Οὕτως ἔρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ Ὁ ὢν ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

you that **I am** he. So, if you seek me, let these men go.”³²

9 This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: “Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one.”

The places with "I am" in bold script (emphasis mine) have only "I am" in Greek, meaning here of course I am Jesus whom you want to take captive. But because the Greek answer is only "I am", it is still possible that John intended it to be a pointer to the power of the divine name in Ex 3:14 which lets the soldiers fall to the ground and shows the total superiority of Jesus.

The "I am"-line of thought is not only important in John's gospel but also in the Revelation that God gave John. We can find "I am" statements about God the Father there and about Jesus Christ. In Rv 1:4 God the Father is called "who is and who was and who is to come"³³ which is a kind of translation of God's name in Ex 3:14 where God's name based on the Hebrew imperfect form could be translated according to the possible contexts as "I am who I am" or "I was who I was" or "I shall be who I shall be".

Rv 1:8 is even closer to Ex 3:14 (emphasis of "quotation part" mine):

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, **“who is** and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”³⁴

There are other instances where God's name is presented in imitation and adaption of Ex 3:14 in Revelation (4:8; 11:17³⁵). Christ's speaking in Rv 1:17-18 resembles certain elements of Rv 1:8 where God the Father is speaking:

32. 5 ἀπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ• Ἰησοῦν τὸν Ναζωραῖον. λέγει αὐτοῖς• Ἐγὼ εἰμι. εἰστίκει δὲ καὶ Ἰούδας ὁ παραδιδούς αὐτὸν μετ' αὐτῶν. 6 ὥς οὖν εἶπεν αὐτοῖς• Ἐγὼ εἰμι, ἀπῆλθον εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω καὶ ἔπασαν χαμαί. 7 πάλιν οὖν ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτούς• Τίνα ζητεῖτε; οἱ δὲ εἶπαν• Ἰησοῦν τὸν Ναζωραῖον. 8 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς• Εἶπον ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι• εἰ οὖν ἐμὲ ζητεῖτε, ἄφετε τούτους ὑπάγειν•

33. The Greek ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος is like a quote from the LXX of Ex 3:14 which has been enriched with καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος

34. Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, λέγει κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ.

35. In this last instance the part "and is to come" is dropped, because at the time of the seventh trumpet God has already come.

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last,"³⁶ 18 and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

According to its meaning the fact that Christ is "the first and last"³⁷ is identical with God being "the Alpha and the Omega". Therefore Christ (cf. 22:16) can say about himself in Rv 22:13:

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.³⁸

Christ is called "The Word" (ὁ λόγος ἡ ῥῆσις).

It is the apostle John who calls Jesus the Word in three different sections of his books, in his gospel, the Revelation and his first letter.

The prologue of John's gospel presents Jesus as the eternal Word (Jn 1:1-3.14):

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.³⁹ 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made... 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.⁴⁰

The qualities of the Word and so of Jesus are that he was already there in the beginning. This means that he is eternal and was there before the foundation of the world. He was with God, showing his personality and fellowship with God the Father (cf. Jn 17:5.24). He is even God himself. He took part in

36. ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος

37. See also Rv 2:8 and compare with Is 41:4; 44:06; 48:12 where the same expressions are used for the one and only true God.

38. ἐγὼ τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος.

39. 1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

40. Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας•

the creation of the world so that everything was created through him (cf. Gn 1:1-3; Ps 33:6). He became flesh and we know him under the name of Jesus Christ, the only Son from the Father.

In Rv 19:13 we hear the name of Jesus who rides on his white horse into battle:

... and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.⁴¹

This means that Jesus is the Word of God in person. Wherever God speaks, he does it through his Word. This agrees with John 1:1-3 where God spoke in creation and so created everything through his Word. But this is also true for the self-revelation of God throughout salvation history through his Word (cf. 1 Pt 1:10-12). Jesus Christ is the voice of God. This is also true for God's ongoing activity in sustaining the world through his Word (Heb 1:3).

The beginning of John's first letter has several parallels to the prologue of his gospel (1 Jn 1:1-3):

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us⁴² - 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Here Christ is called "the Word of life" or "the Eternal Life". This Word of life was also there in the beginning as in John 1:1 (cf. also Jn 1:4). As the author of John 1:14 claims to be an eyewitness of the Word, so does

41. καὶ κέκληται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ὁ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ.

42. 1 Ὁ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ὃ ἀκηκόαμεν, ὃ ἐώρακάμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν, ὃ ἐθεασάμεθα καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν, περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς— 2 καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, καὶ ἐώρακάμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον ἣτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν

the author of this letter claim to be a witness for the Word of life with his eyes, his ears and even his hands. This will be especially related to the appearances of the risen Christ (cf. Jn 20:1-21:25). He gives his testimony to lead people to Christ, perfect joy and to eternal life (1 Jn 1:4; 5:13). As the Word of Life is divine in the beginning of the letter, so Jesus Christ is God and eternal life at the end of letter (1 Jn 5:20) which is an inclusion similar to Jn 1:1-3.14 and 20:28.

Christ is called “Son of Man” (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἡ ὑιὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) in a way that points back to Dn 7:13.

“Son of Man” is used 84 times in the four gospels and in addition to that only once in Acts 7:56⁴³. Within the four gospels it is a normal way of Jesus referring to himself. People might misunderstand this title as just presenting Jesus as a son of Adam, as a mere man. But this is not quite correct if we look at the way Jesus himself used this term when asked in the Jewish Sanhedrin, their "Supreme Court", whether he is the Christ or not (Mt 26:63-66:

63 But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” 64 Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”⁴⁴ 65 Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. 66 What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.”

The answer of Jesus includes at least three elements which led to his condemnation as a blasphemer and worthy of death: His statement "You have

43. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 546.

44. λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Σὺ εἶπας· πλὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅτι ἄρτι ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καθήμενον ἐκ δεξιῶν τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

said so" means "Yes, I am the Christ, the Son of God". As soon as somebody claims this, but is not the Christ, this is regarded as blasphemy and a capital offense. The Sanhedrin rejected this claim of Jesus and sentenced him to death. But Jesus used this opportunity to add even more to what seemed to be a wrong claim. He claimed to be the fulfiller of Ps 110:1 who is going to sit after this day ("from now on") at the right hand of God being identical with "the Son of Man" of Daniel 7:13-14 who comes with the clouds of heaven into the presence of God to rule forever:

13 I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Here we see that the connection of this title with Daniel 7:13 is of the utmost importance. It does not present Jesus as a mere man, a common man, but as the "Son of Man" who rules all nations forever sitting in the presence of God Almighty. The people of the Sanhedrin understood this as abundant evidence against Jesus proving him to be worthy of death. The only section outside the gospels where this term is used agrees totally with this picture and leads to another death at the hands of the people of the Sanhedrin. They stone Stephen just after he proclaimed (Acts 7:56):

Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.⁴⁵

This title brings Christ as closely into God's presence as is possible. He is the divine man next to God the Father who lives and rules forever fulfilling God's plan and God's purpose.

45. Ἴδου θεωρῶ τοὺς οὐρανοὺς διηνοιγμένους καὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ δεξιῶν ἐστῶτα τοῦ θεοῦ.

Christ is called “Son of God” (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἡγιὸς τοῦ θεοῦ) in a way that presents him as divine.

In order to understand the way the Bible uses the title "Son of God" for Jesus Christ, it is useful that we also look at other uses of "Son" or "Sons of God" in the Bible.

1. Angels as "the sons of God" Job 1:6; 2:1; Gn 6:2 if combined with Jude 1:6-7.
2. The Israelites as a whole nation are called "firstborn son" of God (Ex 4:22).
3. The Israelites as individuals are called "sons of God" or "children of God" and are admonished to live accordingly (Dt 14:1). Believers in Israel are called "the generation of your children" in contrast to unbelieving Israelites (Ps 73:15).
4. In a very similar the individual Christian believers in the New Testament are called children of God, because they have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord (Gal 3:25-29).
5. The anointed king and son of David is called "son of God" (2 Sm 7:14). This text is also the foundation for the title "Son of God" for the coming Christ from the line of David in the New Testament (e.g. Mt 16:16).
6. God calls the judges in Ps 82:6-7 "gods, sons of the Most High", but threatens that they should die "like men... like any prince".
7. The title "Son of God" used for Jesus Christ.
 - (a) Jesus is "Son of God" as born from the virgin Mary to sit on the throne of David, the Christ of Israel and king of the Jews (Lk 1:31-35).
 - (b) He is "Son of God" as anointed by the Holy Spirit after his baptism (Lk 3:22).

- (c) He "was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1:3-4; cf. Acts 13:33-35; 17:31).
- (d) John speaks of Jesus as the "only Son" of God the Father (Jn 1:14.18; 3:16.18; 1 Jn 4:9).⁴⁶
- (e) Jesus is also the eternal, pre-existent Son of God who was loved by the Father before the foundation of the world and had divine glory and through whom all things have been created (Jn 1:1-3.14; 10:36; Heb 1:1-12).
- (f) As the Son of God Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth and is higher than all men and all angels (Mt 11:25-27; 17:5; 28:18-20; 1 Cor 15:28; Jn 5:20-25; 3:35-36; 16:15).
- (g) As the Son Jesus is the revelation of God the Father (Jn 8:19; 14:9; Heb 1:2-3).

9.3.2 **Jesus has divine qualities.**

1. He exercises divine power which is normally only found with the almighty God. He "rebuked the winds and the sea" (Mt 8:26-27; cf. Ps 89:9). He feeds 5000 men and declares himself to be the bread of life giving life for ever (Jn 6:11.35-40). In the series of his miracles he reveals "his" glory inviting faith in him (Jn 2:11). He forgives sins (Mk 2:5.7).
2. He is from eternity. He can say "Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn 8:58 and "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rv 22:13; cf. 1:17).
3. He is immortal. He was only killed according to the flesh in his humanity, but never ceased to exist according to his deity. He made himself alive again (Jn Jn 2:19; 10:17-18). He is the Author of life

46. In Lk 7:12 it denotes the only son of a widow; in Lk 8:42 the only daughter of Jairus; in Lk 9:38 the only son of the father who asks Jesus to cast out the evil spirit; in Heb 11:17 Abraham offered up Isaac his only son.

- (Acts 3:15) who has "the power of an indestructible life" (Heb 7:16; cf. 1 Tm 6:16).
4. He knows everything. He knows that some people present think that he blasphemes by forgiving sins (Mk 2:8). He knows Nathanael and his qualities even before meeting him (Jn 1:48) which is also true for all the others he met (2:25; 6:64). Indeed Jesus knows "all things" (16:30; 21:17).
 5. He is everywhere at the same time (Mt 18:20; 28:20).
 6. He is worthy to be worshiped (Phil 2:9-11; cf. Is 45:23-24; Heb 1:6; Rv 5:8-13; Mt 28:17).

9.3.3 How can we understand Phil 2:5-8?

When Paul says, that Christ "made himself nothing" or "emptied himself", does he mean that Jesus gave up some of his divine attributes while on earth?⁴⁷ Was he less than divine?

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.⁴⁸ 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The first thing to note is that Paul wants to encourage a humble conduct amongst the Philippians (Phil 2:3-4) and therefore talks of the humility of

47. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 549-552.

48. 6 ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, 7 ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος• καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος

Christ as the example par excellence (Phil 2:5-8) which was rewarded by God the Father in giving him the name and place above all others (Phil 2:9-11).

That Christ had "the form of God" in heaven before his incarnation and enjoyed "equality with God", means that all beings in heaven knew and had to acknowledge the deity of Christ in heaven which was visible to all as his divine glory (cf. Jn 17:5,24).

That Christ "emptied himself" by "taking the form of a servant" in his incarnation and his humble, serving life on earth, does not mean that he threw off his deity, but only that he was hiding the visible radiance of his divine glory and exchanging it with the visible form of a human servant, who would even humble himself so far as to die the shameful and dishonoring death of a rejected and cursed criminal at the cross. All this Christ did in obedience to God the Father's guidance.

What would have been the use of Christ's incarnation if he would have come not in the humble visible form of a weak baby in the manger, but in the full radiance of his divine glory which would have killed all men coming to see him (Ex 33:20; Jn 1:18)? In hiding his visible divine glory, he fulfilled the purpose of his incarnation to become the Savior and not destructor of mankind (Jn 12:47). Paul the author of Phil 2:7 makes it clear that he does not view the incarnated Christ as having lost his deity, but as revealing and housing it in the flesh (Col 2:9)⁴⁹:

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.⁵⁰

Or as Paul puts the same mystery in the words of 1 Tm 3:16:

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:
He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,

49. Cf. also Col 1:19.

50. ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς

taken up in glory.⁵¹

9.3.4 What positive effects has the full deity of Christ?

The divine Christ is mediator and Savior.

By being God and man Jesus Christ could become the mediator between God and mankind and he could give himself as a valid ransom for all laying the foundation for the potential salvation of all, if they accept Christ as Savior, Lord and mediator in the gospel for all nations (1 Tm 2:5-7).⁵²

The divine Christ makes us partakers of the divine nature.

By uniting the deity with humanity in his incarnation Christ made it possible that his people become partakers of the divine nature. Those who accept Jesus Christ by faith, become one spirit with him, the Lord (1 Cor 6:17). They have received great promises through which they "may become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pt 1:4). They are treated and disciplined by God as his own sons that they "may share his holiness" (Heb 12:5-11, esp. 10; 1 Jn 3:1-2).

9.4 The Incarnation: Deity and Humanity United in the Person of Christ

9.4.1 Three heretical views of Christ's person.

These three are called Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Monophysitism and have been rejected by what was later called orthodoxy.⁵³

51. καὶ ὁμολογουμένως μέγα ἐστὶν τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον· Ὃς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί, ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι, ὤφθη ἀγγέλοις, ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν, ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ, ἀνελήμφθη ἐν δόξῃ.

52. Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 553.

53. In this section we follow *ibid.*, p. 554-556.

Apollinarianism

About A.D. 361 Apollinaris became bishop of Laodicea⁵⁴ He taught that Jesus Christ had a human body (σάρξ sarx) and a human soul (ψυχή psy-chē), but not a human mind (νοῦς nōus). According to Apollinaris Jesus had instead of the human mind the divine "Word" (ὁ λόγος hō lōgōs).⁵⁵ His view was rejected at the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381.⁵⁶ If Jesus had not "a human mind or spirit" he would not have been "like his brothers in every respect" (Heb 2:17).⁵⁷

Nestorianism

Nestorius belonged theologically to the Antiochian school of thought and exegesis and was after 428 C.E. Bishop of Constantinople. He preached against the designation of Mary as "the mother of God" (Θεοτόκος thēōtōkōs) which was widely in use at that time:

You ask...whether Mary may be called *mother of God*. Has God then a mother? If so, heathenism itself is excusable in assigning mothers to its gods...; but then Paul is a liar, for he said of the deity of Christ that it was without father, without mother, and without descent.⁵⁸ No, my dear sir, Mary did not bear God; ... the creature bore not the uncreated Creator, but the man who is the instrument of the Godhead; the Holy Ghost conceived not the Logos, but formed for him, out of the virgin, a temple which he might inhabit... The incarnate God did not die, but quickened him in whom he was made flesh

54. Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 554. According to Heussi, Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte, §24w he died between 385 and 395 in old age.

55. For a more detailed presentation of the ideas of Apollinaris see Harnack, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte - Zweiter Band: Die Entwicklung des kirchlichen Dogmas I, p. 324-333.

56. Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 555.

57. ὅθεν ᾠφείλεν κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι, ἵνα ἐλεήμων γένηται καὶ πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, εἰς τὸ ἱλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ•

58. Heb 7:3 ἀπάτωρ, ἀμήτωρ, ἄνευ γενεαλογίας

.... This garment, which he used, I honor on account of the God which was covered therein and inseparable therefrom; ...*I separate the natures, but I unite the worship.* Consider what this must mean. He who was formed in the womb of Mary, was not himself God, but God assumed him (*assumsit*, i.e., clothed himself with humanity), and on account of Him who assumed, he who was assumed is also called God.⁵⁹

This preaching started a controversy in Constantinople and beyond. For many people the veneration of Mary was very important for their devotion and they felt that Nestorius had attacked something substantial. In the course of the controversy the bishop Cyril of Alexandria in Egypt became an influential opponent to the ideas of Nestorius and the word *thēōtōkōs* became the watchword of the orthodox party.⁶⁰ In this controversy Nestorius did not acknowledge a personal unity⁶¹ of the two natures in Christ, but only "a moral unity, an intimate friendship or conjunction"⁶². The question was whether Christ would not fall apart into two persons according to the teaching of Nestorius. Perhaps this was not the case for Nestorius himself, but the teaching of "Nestorianism" is understood to imply two persons, a human and a divine who are not really united in Christ.⁶³ Nestorius lost his office as bishop. His teachings were condemned at the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431.⁶⁴

59. Quoted according to Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church - Volume III Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity A.D. 311-600* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 717-718.

60. *ibid.*, pp. 718, 721.

61. Ἐνωσις καθ' ὑπόστασιν *hēnōsis kath' hypōstasin*

62. Συνάφεια *synaphēia* So Schaff, *History of the Christian Church - Volume III Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity A.D. 311-600*, p. 719. Cf. Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte - Zweiter Band: Die Entwicklung des kirchlichen Dogmas I*, p. 356.

63. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 555.

64. William Young, *Rasulo ke naqshe qadam par*, Lahore, 1998, p. 250.

Monophysitism (Eutychianism)

Monophysitism asserts that Christ has only one nature.⁶⁵ This view is also called Eutychianism after Eutyches who was the leader of a monastery of 300 monks in Constantinople. After the incarnation Eutyches saw only one nature, not two in Christ: Only one nature should be worshiped, "the nature of God become flesh and man"⁶⁶ The problem with this view is that the human nature and divine nature in Christ do not remain fully human and fully divine. The human nature of Christ seems absorbed into the divine nature with the result that both natures are changed and a third nature results.⁶⁷

9.4.2 The orthodox answer to the controversy: The Chalcedonian Definition of A.D. 451.

Chalcedon is a town in Bithynia not far away from Constantinople (modern Istanbul). In 451 it became the place of one of the most important Councils of Church history. The Symbol of Chalcedon (For the full text with the Greek in parallel see ??) tries to protect the mystery of the person of Christ against ideas which were seen as misunderstandings or false teachings.

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable (rational) soul and body; consubstantial (coessential) with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead,

65. From Greek *mōnōs* "one" and *physis* "nature".

66. Μίαν φύσιν προσκυνεῖν, καὶ ταύτην Θεοῦ σαρκωθέντος καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντος . Eutychus also "declared before the synod at Constantinople: Ὁμολογῶ ἐκ δύο φύσεων γεγενῆσθαι τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν πρὸ τῆς ἐνέσεως• μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἔνωσιν μίαν φύσιν ὁμολογῶ. Quotes according to Schaff, *History of the Christian Church - Volume III Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity A.D. 311-600*, p. 736-737.

67. So with Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 556.

and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, *inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning (have declared) concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.⁶⁸

The following words are against Apollinaris: "truly man, of a reasonable soul and body... consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us".⁶⁹

The following words are against Nestorianism: "indivisibly, inseparably... concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons."⁷⁰

The following words are against Monophysitism: "to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably ... the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved."⁷¹

The strenght of the Chalcedonian definition lies in the use of negative

68. Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical notes. Volume II. The Greek and Latin Creeds, with Translations*, vol. 2 (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1877), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds2.html>, p. 103-108. Emphasis Schaff.

69. ἄνθρωπον ἀληθῶς τὸν αὐτὸν, ἐκ ψυχῆς λογικῆς καὶ σώματος,...καὶ ὁμοούσιον τὸν αὐτὸν ἡμῖν κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα, κατὰ πάντα ὅμοιον ἡμῖν

70. ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως...καὶ εἰς ἓν πρόσωπον καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν συντρεχούσης, οὐκ εἰς δύο πρόσωπα μεριζόμενον ἢ διαιρούμενον

71. ἐκ δύο φύσεων (ἐν δύο φύσεσιν), ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως...οὐδαμοῦ τῆς τῶν φύσεων διαφορᾶς ἀνηρημένης διὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν, σωζομένης δὲ μᾶλλον τῆς ιδιότητος ἐκατέρας φύσεως

terms which reject perceived erroneous teachings about the two natures in Christ on the one hand (inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably) and on the other hand in leaving the inmost mystery of the relationship of the two natures unexplained.

9.4.3 Understanding biblical texts with Christ's deity and humanity in one person in mind.

It is interesting to look at biblical texts with the idea of the two natures of Christ in mind.⁷²

Christ's deeds according to his humanity and deity

According to his humanity Christ went up to heaven in his resurrected human body (Acts 1:9-11), but according to his divine nature he can be at the same time at all places (Mt 28:20). According to his human nature Christ passed through the different ages of man (Lk 3:23), but according to his deity he is from eternity and not subjected to time (Jn 1:1-2; 8:58). As man Jesus could be hungry, thirsty and tired (Lk 4:2; Jn 19:28; 4:6), as God he rules and sustains the world and its elements (Mt 8:26-27; Heb 1:3). As man he died (Lk 23:46), as God he raised himself up again (Jn 2:19). With regard to the will power of Jesus Grudem explains:

At this point it seems necessary to say that Jesus had two distinct wills, a human will and a divine will, and that the wills belong to the two distinct natures of Christ, not to the person. In fact, there was a position, called the monothelite view, which held that Jesus had only 'one will,' but that was certainly a minority view in the church, and it was rejected as heretical at a church council in Constantinople in A.D. 681... This distinction of two wills and two centers of consciousness helps us understand how Jesus could learn things and yet know all things.⁷³

72. With Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 558-563.

73. *ibid.*, p. 560-561.

With this in mind Mt 26:39-42 would be a good example for the human will of Jesus Christ coming to rest in the sovereign will of God learning and practicing perfect obedience even in suffering (Heb 5:8). An example for his limited human knowledge where Jesus has to learn would be Lk 2:52 and Mk 13:32 while other texts show his divine knowledge of all (Jn 2:25; 16:30; 21:17).

The person of Christ is the agent of the deeds of his humanity or his deity.

Christ is before Abraham was (Jn 8:58; deed of his deity). Christ died for our sins (1 Cor 15:3; deed of his humanity). Christ is leaving the world (Jn 16:28; deed of his humanity) and he is with his people every day and everywhere (Mt 28:20; deed of his deity).

Communication of attributes

Grudem aptly explains about the qualities that were given from one nature in Christ to the other:

(1) From the divine nature to the human nature...

Jesus' human nature gained (a) a worthiness to be worshiped and (b) an inability to sin...

(2) From the human nature to the divine nature

Jesus' human nature gave him (a) an ability to experience suffering and death; (b) an ability to understand by experience what we are experiencing; and (c) an ability to be our substitute sacrifice, which Jesus as God alone could not have done.⁷⁴

The incarnation is the greatest miracle and mystery of the Bible and of salvation history. What is expressed in John 1:14 has been summarized with this short and helpful sentence:

74. *ibid.*, p. 563.

Remaining what he was, he became what he was not.⁷⁵

75. Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 563.

Chapter 10

The Work of Christ

10.1 The Offices of Jesus the Christ

Christ or Messiah means the anointed one¹ and could be used in the Old Testament for the high priest², kings³ and prophets⁴. We will understand it here as a designation for the promised prophet-king, priest and Savior Jesus who brings peace and salvation to the people of God and a time of uninterrupted blessing to all nations of the earth. In the New Testament Jesus Christ is called prophet (Mt 21:11; 16:14; Acts 3:22-23), king (Mt 2:2; 27:37; 28:18; Lk 1:31-33; Rv 19:16) and priest (Heb 2:17; 4:15).

10.1.1 Jesus as King

In subsection 9.1.3 we have seen that Jesus as the son of David is king. The responsibility of a king is that he obeying the law of God (Dt 17:18-19) guides and rules God's people. A good parable of a king's responsibility is the work of a shepherd: protecting and guiding the sheep and fulfilling their

1. מָשִׁיחַ

2. Lev 4:3.5.16; 6:22

3. 1 Sm 2:10.35; 12:3.5; 16:6; 24:6.10; 26:9.11.16.23; 2 Sm 23:1

4. 1 Chr 16:16-17.22 for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; 1 Kgs 19:16

necessities (Ps 23; Jn 10:1-30). The promised Christ is true and faithful in judgment and will implement God's law in all the world (Is 11:1-4; 42:1-4). Jesus is fulfilling his calling as a king (Jn 10:11; 18:37; 1 Tm 6:13; Mt 21:4-5; 28:18-20).

10.1.2 **Jesus as Prophet**

There is a prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy (18:15) which is more than once understood⁵ as a pointer to Jesus in the New Testament:

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers - it is to him you shall listen.

The section in Dt 18:15-22 could be understood as a general prediction of coming prophets and this maybe the first intended meaning in this context. But if we combine it with the closure of the book Dt 34:10-12 the statement of a prophet "like Moses" becomes more special:

9 And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the Lord had commanded Moses. 10 And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, 11 none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, 12 and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

Joshua had been appointed by God through Moses and he served the Lord and his people as a good spirit-gifted leader. But he was not like Moses. Moses was a prophet and a savior figure sent by God with signs and wonders. When Jesus came as a prophet with signs and wonders he was accepted by believers such as Stephen as the promised prophet like Moses who was also the ultimate Savior (Acts 7:34-39.51-53).

5. See Acts 3:22; 7:37; Mt 17:5; Mk 9:4.7; Lk 9:35.

A prophet is a mediator. His responsibility is to receive the word from God and proclaim it to God's people. This prophecy is a gift from the Holy Spirit (Mic 3:8). His responsibility is also to hear the requests of the people of God and see their situation and bring these before God in intercession (1 Sm 12:23). Jesus is fulfilling his calling as a prophet (Mt 4:17,23; 7:24,28-29; Mk 1:35; Lk 5:16).

10.1.3 **Jesus as Priest**

The priest is also a mediator. Like a prophet he also proclaims the word of God to God's people, but he gets it from God's law given through Moses (Mal 2:7; Jer 18:18). Like the prophets the priest is also busy in intercession bringing the situation of God's people before God (Ex 28:7-30). In addition to this his special calling is to serve God in the tabernacle or in the temple and so to live closer to the presence of God as any other Israelite. Through sacrifices he brings the people of God into God's presence. If they fall into sin and repent, he can make atonement for them through the blood of sacrifices to restore their relationship with God. Jesus is fulfilling his calling as a priest (Heb 7:14-28; 9:14-15; 9:22-28; 10:19-23; Rom 8:34; Rv 5:10).

10.2 **The Atonement through Jesus Christ**

One of the most important aspects of the work of Jesus Christ is his atoning for the sins of the whole world. We talk about this in the section about atonement in soteriology, especially atonement in the New Testament which of course is completely dependent on Christ's work (see subsection 11.2.2). We do it in that section because we want to understand the language of the New Testament for atonement on the background of the imagery and phrases of the Old Testament which is the preceding section there (see subsection 11.2.1).

10.3 The Historicity of Christ's Death and its Importance.

10.3.1 The Problem of Docetism

Ignatius opposing docetism.

One of the earliest writers against docetism in the time after the New Testament is Ignatius of Antioch. We can use his letters to understand and define this early form of docetism: In the heresy of docetism of his time it is denied that Jesus had a real and permanent human body and consequently it is also denied that he really suffered and died in a real bodily sense at the cross. Docetism derives from the Greek word *dōkein* δοκεῖν and means in this context "to seem", "to look like". It only looked as if Christ had a body or as if he died. He did not really have a body and did not really die. According to Schaff⁶ Ignatius was bishop of Antioch "at the close of the first century and the beginning of the second" and was condemned to death in 107 C.E. or between 110 and 116, "transported to Rome, and thrown before wild beasts in the Colosseum". Some of his epistles are disputed, but "the seven shorter Greek Ep. are genuine".⁷ He wrote his seven epistles on his journey to his martyrdom in Rome⁸ He wrote to the Trallians, X:

But if, as some that are without God, that is, the unbelieving, say, that He only seemed to suffer (they themselves only seeming to exist),⁹ then why am I in bonds? Why do I long to be exposed to the wild beasts? Do I therefore die in vain? Am I not then guilty of falsehood against [the cross of] the Lord?¹⁰

6. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church - Volume II Ante-Nicene Christianity* A.D. 100-325, p. 47-48.

7. *ibid.*, p. 47.

8. *ibid.*, p. 656.

9. The Greek according to O. de Gebhardt, A. Harnack, and Th. Zahn, *Patrum Apostolicorum Opera - editio quinta minor* (Leipzig, 1906), p. 99 reads: λέγουσιν, τὸ δοκεῖν πεπονθέναι αὐτόν, αὐτοὶ ὄντες τὸ δοκεῖν

10. Schaff, ANF01. *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, p. 102.

And to the Smyrneans IV,2:

But if these things were done by our Lord only in appearance, then am I also only in appearance bound.¹¹

To the Smyrneans V,2:

For what does any one profit me, if he commends me, but blasphemes my Lord, not confessing that He was [truly] possessed of a body?¹² But he who does not acknowledge this, has in fact altogether denied Him, being enveloped in death.¹³

Irenaus about the docetism of Basilides.

Irenaus (Against Heresies I, xxiv, 4) gives the following information of the teaching of Basilides who spread his ideas in Alexandria in Egypt. What is interesting for our subject is that according to him Simon of Cyrene was crucified and not Jesus.

4. Those angels who occupy the lowest heaven, that, namely, which is visible to us, formed all the things which are in the world, and made allotments among themselves of the earth and of those nations which are upon it. The chief of them is he who is thought to be the God of the Jews; and inasmuch as he desired to render the other nations subject to his own people, that is, the Jews, all the other princes resisted and opposed him. Wherefore all other nations were at enmity with his nation. But the father without birth and without name, perceiving that they would be destroyed, sent his own first-begotten Nous (he it is who is called Christ) to bestow deliverance on them that believe in him, from the power of those

11. *ibid.*, p. 124. The Greek according to Gebhardt, Harnack, and Zahn, *Patrum Apostolicorum Opera* - editio quinta minor, p. 108 reads: εἰ γὰρ τὸ δοκεῖν ταῦτα ἐπράχθη ὑπὸ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν, καὶ γὰρ τὸ δοκεῖν δέδεμαι.

12. The Greek according to *ibid.*, p. 108 reads: τὸν δὲ κύριόν μου βλασφημεῖ, μὴ ὁμολογῶν αὐτὸν σαρκοφόρον;

13. Schaff, ANF01. The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, p. 125.

who made the world. He appeared, then, on earth as a man, to the nations of these powers, and wrought miracles. Wherefore he did not himself suffer death, but Simon, a certain man of Cyrene, being compelled, bore the cross in his stead; so that this latter being transfigured by him, that he might be thought to be Jesus, was crucified, through ignorance and error, while Jesus himself received the form of Simon, and, standing by, laughed at them. For since he was an incorporeal power, and the *Nous* (mind) of the unborn father, he transfigured himself as he pleased, and thus ascended to him who had sent him, deriding them, inasmuch as he could not be laid hold of, and was invisible to all.¹⁴

The system of Basilides is antisemitic and gnostic. Salvation is only for the soul, matter is inferior and there is the body which is made of matter. Therefore the idea that the Savior would become flesh is nonsensical and ridiculous. People who confess Jesus as the crucified Christ have not yet the real knowledge or insight (= *gnosis* in Greek).

Summary of the examples of both schools of docetism.

There were more gnostic schools teaching docetism. These two may suffice as examples. In the world views both of the docetism Ignatius was opposing and the docetism of Basilides reasons can be found why both would deny the real suffering of Jesus and his having a real human body. One main reason seems to be that matter is thought to be evil or inferior and the spirit world to be superior and not compatible with the world of matter. The Savior figure therefore can not really become flesh and can not really suffer in the flesh or body. Salvation can not be based on the shedding of the blood of an innocent person. As we find this gnostic denial of the suffering of Jesus of Nazareth in the body of flesh and blood in the second century we may ask what evidence was there in that time or is today which can be used to affirm that Jesus of Nazareth really died at the cross.

14. Schaff, ANF01. The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, p. 500.

10.3.2 Evidence from Non-Christian Sources

Before we turn to "Christian" testimonies about the fact and the importance of the death of Jesus at the cross, let us look at non-Christian testimonies first. There are some Jewish and Roman testimonies.

Jewish Sources

The Talmud. F.F. Bruce says about the Jewish witness from the Talmud:¹⁵

As the Mishnah is a law-code, and the Talmuds commentaries on this code, there is little occasion in these writings for references to Christianity, and what references there are are hostile. But, such as they are, these references do at least show that there was not the slightest doubt of the historical character of Jesus.

According to the earlier Rabbis whose opinions are recorded in these writings, Jesus of Nazareth was a transgressor in Israel, who practiced magic, scorned the words of the wise, led the people astray, and said he had not come to destroy the law but to add to it. He was hanged on Passover Eve for heresy and misleading the people. His disciples, of whom five are named, healed the sick in his name.

It is clear that this is just such a portrayal of our Lord as we might expect from those elements in the Pharisaic party which were opposed to Him.

Josephus Flavius Josephus was a first-century Jew who witnessed the Jewish war and became attached to the Flavian family because he had foretold the Roman commander Vespasian that he would become Caesar.¹⁶ Living in Rome he authored several books about the Jewish history. In his

15. F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents - Are they reliable?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978), p. 101.

16. *ibid.*, p. 103.

"Antiquities" (XX, 9, 1) Josephus relates the death of James, the brother of Jesus and gives so an indirect testimony to the existence of Jesus and to the fact that his brother James was important for the church in Jerusalem.

...but this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high-priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent ... Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others ... and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.¹⁷

There is another testimony about John the Baptist in Antiquities XVIII, 5, 2 and a testimony about Jesus in Antiquities XVIII, 3,3. In this testimony Bruce discards certain elements as Christian interpolations,¹⁸ and retains the following elements of the Testimonium Flavianum:

We have therefore very good reason for believing that Josephus did make reference to Jesus, bearing witness to (a) His date, (b) His reputation as a wonderworker, (c) His being the brother of James, (d) His crucifixion under Pilate at the information of the Jewish rulers, (e) His messianic claim, (f) His being the founder of 'the tribe of Christians', and probably (g) the belief in His rising from the dead.

Roman Sources

The evidence from the Roman historian Tacitus about the death of Jesus under Pontius Pilate is related to the rumor that Nero himself had ordered fire to be laid to the parts of Rom which he wanted to rebuild in new glory:¹⁹

17. Josephus, *The Works of Flavius Josephus, Volume IV: Antiquities of the Jews XVIII-XX / Flavius Josephus Against Apion / Concerning Hades / Appendix / Index*, p. 139-140.

18. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents - Are they reliable?*, p. 108-112.

19. Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals*, trans. Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, *The Internet Classics Archive*, [accessed February 6, 2013] (109), [http :](http://www.ics.uci.edu/~iannacci/tacitus/annals.htm)

But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace.

Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.

Summary of the Non-Christian Sources

Neither the Roman witnesses nor the Jewish have any problem with the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. The death of Jesus is attested in both areas. His death is no problem. His resurrection is neither acceptable for the Gentile mindset nor for Rabbinical Judaism.

10.3.3 Evidence from the New Testament

The Use of the Noun "Cross" in the New Testament

The cross in the Gospels.

The cross of the disciple in the Gospels. Even when the Gospels speak of the cross of the believers who follow Jesus, it is implied that they only carry their own cross by following Jesus who goes in front and carries his cross. So even here the cross of Christ is implied: Mt 10:38; Mt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Lk 9:23; 14:27.

The cross of Jesus Christ in the Gospels. Jesus is bearing his own cross to Golgotha in John 19:17. Carson sheds light on this:

This refers to the cross-member, the horizontal bar (Lat. patibulum). The condemned criminal bore it on his shoulders to the place of execution, where the upright beam of the gibbet was already fastened in the ground. The victim was then made to lie on his back on the ground, where his arms were stretched out and either tied or nailed to the patibulum. The cross-member was then hoisted up, along with the victim, and fastened to the vertical beam. The victims's feet were tied or nailed to the upright, to which was also sometimes attached a piece of wood that served as a kind of seat (Lat. sedecula) that partially supported the body's weight. This was designed to increase the agony, not relieve it.²⁰

The cross of Jesus is carried by Simon of Cyrene in Mt 27:32, Mk 15:21, and Lk 23:26, probably because Jesus broke down under the burden after having been tortured and having lost blood.²¹ In Jn 19:19 the reason for the condemnation of Jesus is written and put on the cross:

Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

People who pass by mock Jesus that he should come down from the cross (Mt 27:40; Mk 15:30), the Chief priests and scribes and elders did the same (Mt 27:42; Mk 15:32).

The mother of Jesus, Mary was standing with at least three other women and the writer of the fourth Gospel, John, close to the cross (Jn 19:25). Jesus was taken dead from the cross on the day of preparation before the great Sabbath and buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus in a nearby and never used tomb (Jn 19:31-41).

20. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, UK: Apollos InterVarsity, 1991), 715 pp, p. 608.

21. See *ibid.*, p. 609.

The cross in Paul's letters The cross in Paul's letters is the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross of Christ is the power of God (1 Cor 1:17-18). Justification comes by the cross of Christ alone, not by circumcision of the flesh and keeping the whole law. This is the offense of the cross of Christ (Gal 5:11). Whoever preaches the Cross of Christ as the only way of salvation is persecuted and rejected. The cross of Christ is salvation from one's own flesh and from the world and the door to become a new creation in Christ. As believers we can and should boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (6:12; 6:14).

Through the cross of Christ God has reconciled Israelites and Non-Israelites to God in one body, thereby killing the hostility (Eph 2:16).

Jesus Christ is God who became man and obeyed his heavenly Father always leading a holy life free from sin, loving the Father even more than his own life, becoming obedient to die, to die at the cross. The climax of his love for God and the lost world is his self-humiliation, losing his life and all of his honor at the cross. In answer to this God has raised him from the dead and above all, so that all have to honor Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord and God (Phil 2:8)

The enemies of the cross of Christ perish, those who love the cross of Christ and follow his example will be glorified (Phil 3:18).

The only way of reconciliation for everything is the blood of Christ (Col 1:20). God the Father reconciles the whole world to himself by the blood of Christ. This also means that whoever rejects the blood of Christ has no reconciliation (Col 1:23! Faith is necessary!).

The fullness of God dwelled in the crucified Christ forgiving all our sins and triumphing over all enemies (Col 2:14).

The cross in Hebrews The cross of Christ in Hebrews 12:2 is the way from shame to glory from death to eternal life and joy and so an example for us to follow Christ on the same way (Heb 12:1-2).

The Use of the Verb "Crucify" for Christ in the New Testament

Jesus predicts his crucifixion (Mt 20:19; Mt 26:2). Pilate asks what he should do with Jesus. Pilate himself wanted to release Jesus (Lk 23:20).

The people request his crucifixion (Mt 27:22; Mt 27:23; Mt 27:26; Mk 15:13; Mk 15:14; Mk 15:15; Lk 23:21; Lk 23:23; Jn 19:6; Jn 19:15; Jn 19:16). Pilate says to Jesus that he has the authority to release him or to crucify him (Jn 19:10).

Jesus is mocked and then crucified (Mt 27:31; Mt 27:35; Mk 15:20; Mk 15:24; Mk 15:25; Lk 23:33; Jn 19:18). Jesus was crucified near the city with his "guilt" written over his head in three languages (Jn 19:20). The four soldiers who crucified Jesus divided his garments into four parts and cast lots for his tunic (Jn 19:23). Near the place where Jesus was crucified was a garden tomb where Jesus was laid (Jn 19:41).

Jesus, the crucified, is used almost like a new title of Christ after his resurrection (Mt 28:5; Mk 16:6). The two angels tell the women that Jesus had foretold his crucifixion and resurrection on the third day (Lk 24:7). The two Emmaus disciples report the crucifixion of Jesus to Jesus (Lk 24:20).

The house of Israel is informed by Peter that they have crucified Jesus but God has made him both Lord and Christ in fulfillment of Ps 110:1 (Acts 2:36; cf. 4:10).

Paul preaches "Christ crucified"²² ... the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:23). Paul preached Christ crucified in Corinth (1 Cor 2:2).²³

According to Paul the rulers of this age did not understand God's wisdom (1 Cor 2:8), otherwise the crucifixion would never have happened. Christ was "crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God" (2 Cor 13:4).

Gal 3:1 gives us a good impression of Paul's way to evangelize:

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

The two witnesses in Rv 11 will be killed in Jerusalem 'where their Lord was crucified' (Rv 11:8).

22. Χριστὸν ἐσταυρωμένον

23. 1 Cor 2:2: For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινά τι εἰδέναι ἐν ὑμῖν εἰ μὴ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τοῦτον ἐσταυρωμένον•

The Use of "Tree" for Cross

In these verses the word "tree" or "wood"²⁴ is used for the cross: Acts 5:30;; 10:39-40;; 13:29-31;; Gal 3:13-14;; 1 Pet 2:24;. The Old Testament background to this use seems to be found in Dt 21:22-23 (cf. Gal 3:13):

22 And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God.²⁵ You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.

The death of Jesus verified.

According to Mk 15:44 Pilatus checked from the Centurion whether Jesus had already died before granting the corpse of Jesus to Joseph of Arimathea. In John 19:33-35 the reader is informed that the legs of Jesus were not broken by the soldiers because Jesus was already dead. "But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water" (John 19:34). The piercing of the side of Jesus with the coming out of blood and water already separated was proof that Jesus was really dead.

Evidence from the Lord's Supper

We have four accounts within the New Testament (Mt 26:26-30; Mk 14:22-26; Lk 22:19f.18; 1 Cor 11:23-25) who testify to the fact that Jesus knew about his death beforehand and that he also knew about his death being the foundation of a new world order with forgiveness of sins in fulfillment of Jer 31:31ff. The fact that so many different churches and denominations from the beginning celebrated and still celebrate the Lord's supper is a strong

24. τὸ ξύλον

25. The Lxx has: οὐκ ἐπικοιμηθήσεται τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τοῦ ξύλου, ἀλλὰ ταφῇ θάψετε αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ, ὅτι κεκατηραμένος ὑπὸ θεοῦ πᾶς κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου·

pointer to the historicity of the death of Christ at the cross as a fact and the means of salvation.

Evidence from Baptism.

According to Rom 6:3-6 the symbolic meaning of Christian Baptism is related to crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ:

3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

Every baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit points to the spiritual union of the believer with Jesus Christ (1 Cor 6:17). Because the believer is united with Christ he also inherits his "history", his having being crucified, having died, having been buried, having risen from the dead and having been raised to the right hand of God in heaven (Eph 2:6). The Lord's supper and Christian baptism are thus both inseparably linked to the fact of the death of Jesus Christ at the cross. Both proclaim the death of the Lord (1 Cor 11:26).

Summary of the Evidence from the New Testament

The evidence for the fact of the crucifixion and death of Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament is straightforward. His mother and aunt and best friend stood so close to the cross that Jesus could talk to them. His 11 apostles (12 minus Judas) were eyewitnesses to his sufferings at the cross and to his having risen from the dead. From his friends and from his enemies nobody challenged the fact of the death of Jesus Christ at the cross. His enemies questioned whether he really had risen from the dead.

There is no doubt about the words and the language used for "cross" and "to crucify". All four canonical gospels are structured in a way that the most important part of the narrative is the passion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The death of Christ at the cross and his resurrection are the foundation of eternal salvation and eternal life. In the Lord's supper and Christian baptism the death of Christ at the cross is presented as God's way of salvation already known and proclaimed by Jesus himself.

10.3.4 Evidence from the Creeds of Christendom

The evidence of the ancient creeds is quite impressive because the creeds were used as a summary of the Christian faith. They are given in the appendix in full (??) to give the context for the expressions in which we are interested with regard to our subject. The Symbol of Chalcedon has to be understood together with the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitanum. So the mentioning of the crucifixion of Jesus in the latter is also part of the faith proclaimed in Chalcedon.

10.4 Christ's Resurrection and its Importance.

10.4.1 Words used

1. ἡ ἀνάστασις *anastasis* f. noun, 1. rising, 2. resurrection.²⁶
2. ἀνίστημι *anistēmi* 1. trans.: raise, 2. intrans.: rise.²⁷
3. ἐγείρω *ēgēirō* 1. Active: a. trans.: wake (people who are asleep), raise (who are ill or dead); b. intrans.: only imperative: rise! (Mk 2:9; Eph 5:14). 2. Passive: a. to awake, to wake up; b. to be raised, rise.²⁸
4. ἔγερσις *ēgērsis* f. noun, resurrection (Mt 27:53).²⁹

26. See Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p.119-121.

27. See *ibid.*, p. 138-139.

28. See *ibid.*, p. 425-426.

29. See *ibid.*, p. 426.

5. συνεγείρω synĕġeirō 1. Active: to raise up with (Eph 2:6), 2. Passive: to be raised with (Col 2:12; 3:1).³⁰
6. ζάω zaō to live.³¹
7. ζωοποιέω zōōpoiēō to make alive, to keep alive.³²
8. συζωοποιέω syzōōpoiēō to make alive together with (Eph 2:5; Col 2:13).³³

10.4.2 The resurrection of Jesus Christ

Predicted in the Old Testament

We follow the testimony of the New Testament about the prophecies in the Old. In Ps 16:8-11 David "foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption" (Acts 2:31; 2:24-28). Is 55:3 is quoted partially by Paul in Acts 13:34 as proof of the resurrection of Jesus. In Acts 26:22-23 we find a summary of Old Testament prophecies of Paul:

22 To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: 23 that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.

According to 1 Cor 15:3-4 the death of Christ for our sins, his burial and his resurrection on the third day were predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures.

30. See Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, p. 1556.

31. See *ibid.*, p. 663-666.

32. See *ibid.*, p. 676.

33. See *ibid.*, p. 1537.

Predicted by Jesus himself.

Jesus taught the inner group of his disciples that he would be raised from the dead after his sufferings (Mt 17:9; Mk 9:9,10). That he would meet them in Galilee after being raised (Mt 26:32; Mk 14:28). An angel at the tomb repeated this promise of Jesus to meet them in Galilee (Mt 28:6-7; Mk 16:6-7). In Mark there are predictions of Jesus that he would be raised after three days (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:34). Even the enemies of Jesus knew this teaching and therefore requested the grave to be secured until the third day (Mt 27:63-64). In Matthew and Luke Jesus predicted that he would be raised on the third day (Mt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Lk 9:22; 18:33; cf. Acts 10:40). According to Jn 2:19-22 Jesus said: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19). The risen Christ teaches that it is the prophetic teaching of the OT "that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead" (Lk 24:46; cf. John in Jn 20:9 and Paul in Acts 17:3). The risen Christ rebukes the unbelief of the disciples "because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen" (Mk 16:11,14).

Testified to in the New Testament.

In the New Testament there are different kinds of witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The angels at the tomb quote the teaching of Jesus (Lk 24:6-7 and say that he is risen (Mt 28:6-7; Mk 16:6-7. Every apostle is an eye "witness to the resurrection of Jesus" (Acts 1:22; see also: appeared to Simon (Lk 24:34); seven of the disciples (Jn 21:14); all apostles 2:32; Peter and John 3:15; 4:10; the apostles 4:33; 10:41; Paul (Acts 17:18,32; Acts 25:19). Let us have a look at the resurrection of Jesus according to the four gospels.

Agreements

	Mt	Mk	Lk	Jn
1. Friday evening	27:57	15:42	23:54	19:31.38
2. Joseph from Arimathea	57	43	50-51	19:38
3. asked Pilate	58	43	52	38
4. for the body of Jesus	58	45	52	38
5. Joseph took the body	59	46	53	38
6. and wrapped it in linen	59	46	53	40
7. laid it in the tomb	60	46	53	41 (20:6)
8. rolled stone to entrance	60	46	(24:2)	(20:1)
9. Mary Magdalene and ...	61(27:56)	47(15:40)	55(24:10)	(20:1-2)
10. the first day of the week	28:1	16:1-2	24:1	20:1
11. Mary Magdalene and ...	1	1	10	1-2
12. rolled back the stone	2	4	2	1
13. his clothing white	3	5	4	11
14. He is not here, has risen	6	6	6	-
15. they left the tomb	8	8	9	18
16. some doubted	17	14	11	24-29
17. Jesus met them	9	7.9-14	13-51	20:11ff
18. Sit at my right hand	22:44	19(12:36)	51(21:27)	17(16:7)
19. baptism with the Spirit	3:11	1:8	49	16:7

Special witness

1. The guard at the tomb	28:4.11ff			
2. Appearance to 2 disciples			24:17-32	
3. Appearance to Peter			24:34	
4. Appearance on a mountain	28:16ff			
5. Accompanying signs		16:17ff		
6. Appearance to Thomas				20:24ff
7. Appearance by Tiberian Sea				21:1-23

Differences

1. Time	28:1	16:1	24:1	20:1
2. Numbers of women	1(2...)	1(3...)	10(3+...)1f(1+...)	
3. Place of speaking	5			
4. Where women saw angel	2	3	3-4	1
5. Numbers of angels	2	5	4	(20,12)
6. Women meeting Jesus	9	8 10ff	22ff	18
7. In Jerusalem or in Galilee	7f(26:32)	7(14:28)	24:49	20 + 21

The agreements taken together present a strong testimony to the resurrection which agrees even up to some minor details. The special witness in each gospel shows that there is even more information to be had with the greater number of witnesses than in any single gospel. The differences prove the different accounts to be independent witnesses which would be normal in a legal context of evaluating eye witness accounts of the same event.

Paul presents the case for the resurrection of Christ to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15:3-8) because some denied the idea of a resurrection:

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

10.4.3 **What Jesus taught about the resurrection and his part in it.**

Jesus himself is the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25-26):

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" ³⁴

34. Those who have been raised by Jesus or in his name were a living proof that Jesus himself is "the resurrection and the life" Jn 11:25: Lazarus (Jn 11:43-44; 12:1.9.17); Jairus's Daughter (Mk 5:23.41-42; Lk 8:54-55; Mt 9:18.25); the widow's son at Nain (Lk 7:14); Dorcas (Acts 9:40-41); Eutychus (Acts 20:9.12). Compare the general statement to the disciples of John that at that time dead were being raised (Mt 11:5; Lk 7:22) and the command to raise dead in the name of Jesus (Mt 10:8). It is interesting to note that the miracle of the resurrection of someone has not more convincing power than the inspired word of God (Lk 16:31).

He who believes in him, may die according to his body, but he will not die spiritually. Therefore in John 11 there is a double meaning to "resurrection": according to the body and according to the spirit. Jesus is the resurrection and the life in both meanings.³⁵

God the Son raises himself from the dead (Jn 2:19-22; 10:17-18). He has the power to and he raises the dead (Jn 5:25). Christ will raise his people on the last day and loose none of them (Jn 6:39).

10.4.4 What the apostles taught about the resurrection and Christ's part in it.

The agent of the resurrection

God the Father raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:30; 13:30.32.37; Gal 1:1; 1 Thes 1:10; 1 Pt 1:21). God raises the dead (2 Cor 1:9; Rom 4:17).

God the Son raised himself from the dead (Jn 2:19-22; 10:17-18). God the Son raises the dead (Jn 5:25; 1 Cor 15:22.45). In 2 Tm 2:8 Christ is "risen". In Greek this is written in passive voice without mentioning the agent.

The resurrection and Jesus Christ.

The risen Christ is the living one (Lk 24:5; Acts 1:3; Heb 7:8.25; 1 Pt 2:4.5; Rv 1:18; 2:8). The resurrection shows that Jesus is appointed to be the Son of God, the Christ (Rom 1:4), the judge of the whole world on judgment day (Acts 17:31), and the Lord of all: "For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Rom 14:9).

The power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an enormous divine power (Eph 1:20; Phil 3:10; 2 Cor 13:4). The resurrection of Christ is linked to the biblical teaching of a general resurrection of life and of judgment. It is linked to the resurrection of believers (1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 13:4). The resurrection of Christ is also proof of the teaching of resurrection (Acts 4:2).

Jesus was "the first to rise from the dead" (Acts 26:22-23). The order of resurrection starts with "Christ the firstfruits" (1 Cor 15:23). He is "the

35. This might perhaps be helpful when it comes to understanding Rv 20:4-6.

firstborn from the dead" (Col 1:18). Jesus became the life giving spirit in his resurrection. He can make people alive, he can raise them from the dead (1 Cor 15:45; Jn 5:21). He can say (Rv 1:17-18):

Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

Because Jesus was the first to rise from the dead who would never die again, it is important to note that the saints who were raised according to Mt 27:52-53, were raised "after his resurrection":

52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.³⁶

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the source of life for Christians (Rom 6:4-5.9; 6:10.11.13; 7:4; 8:11.13; 2 Cor 5:15; Gal 2:19-20; 5:24-25; Phil 1:21; 1 Thes 5:10; 1 Pt 2:24; 3:18.21; 4:6; 1 Jn 4:9-10; Eph 5:14; Eph 2:5-6; Col 2:12). This spiritual life is accessible by the work of the Holy Spirit and the words of Jesus Christ (Jn 6:63; 2 Cor 3:6).

Peter explains very nicely how the resurrection Christ has opened the door for our spiritual life by God's loving intervention (1 Pt 1:3):

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.³⁷

The resurrection of Jesus is also the source of justification for Christians. God raised Jesus Christ "for our justification" (Rom 4:24-25). The

36. 52 καὶ τὰ μνημεῖα ἀνεώχθησαν καὶ πολλὰ σώματα τῶν κεκοιμημένων ἁγίων ἠγέρθησαν, 53 καὶ ἐξελθόντες ἐκ τῶν μνημείων μετὰ τὴν ἔγερσιν αὐτοῦ εἰσῆλθον εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν καὶ ἐνεφανίσθησαν πολλοῖς.

37. Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ κατὰ τὸ πολὺ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος ἀναγεννήσας ἡμᾶς εἰς ἐλπίδα ζωῆς δι' ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκ νεκρῶν

risen Christ "is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us" so that nobody could condemn us (Rom 8:34).

The resurrection of Jesus is at the heart of saving faith (Rom 10:9):

because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ first happened for Israel (Acts 3:26). It gives the pattern for the resurrection of the believers (1 Cor 15:42-49) and guarantees their resurrection (2 Cor 4:14).

Chapter 11

Salvation (Soteriology)

Soteriology is the teaching about salvation. What does salvation mean? God is savior. What does he save from? What is the role of faith and trust in God to gain salvation? We are going to answer these questions by looking at the answers the Bible gives us to these questions in the Old and New Testament.

11.1 Salvation

11.1.1 In the Old Testament

Here we shall look at Bible verses which contain words from the root יָשַׁע yš‘ which convey the idea of salvation. The name of Jesus in Hebrew also derives from this same root and belongs to this family of words.

1. יְשׁוּעָה Yəšû‘āh, noun f., means 1. welfare, prosperity, 2. deliverance, 3. salvation, 4. victory.¹
2. יָשַׁע yēša‘, noun m., means 1. safety, welfare, prosperity, 2. salvation, 3. victory.²

1. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 447.

2. *ibid.*, p. 447.

3. תְּשׁוּעָה Təšû'āh, noun f., means 1. deliverance from oppression, victory, 2. salvation.³
4. יָשַׁע yš' to save. The different verb forms of the root yš' mean in Niph'al 1. be liberated, be saved, 2. be saved in battle, be victorious and in Hiph'il 1. deliver, save, 2. save from moral troubles, 3. give victory.⁴
5. יְהוֹשֻׁעַ yəhōšua' and יְהוֹשֻׁעַ yəhōšua' the name of Joshua, meaning 'the LORD is salvation'⁵, later also in a short form יֵשׁוּעַ yēšua' Neh 8,17 = 'Jesus' (LXX Ἰησοῦς).

God and salvation.

The Old Testament often speaks of God as one's salvation or source of salvation (Gn 49:18; Ex 15:2; Ps 69:30; Is 12:2). God's salvation is requested in prayer for Israel (Ps 79:9).

God is the rock of salvation (Dt 32:15; Ps 89:26). God's salvation is a reason for joyful praise (Ps 9:15) and eternal, even if heavens and earth pass away (Is 51:6.8). The good news of salvation is the news of God's kingdom (Is 52:7). God is in person Zion's salvation (Is 62:11). He fights for his people to save them from the wicked (Hb 3:13). The New Jerusalem in Isaiah is a city of divine salvation (Is 26:1; 60:18; 62:1). In the last days God will prove himself to be the salvation of Israel (Jer 3:15-18.23).

God's blessings on Israel can lead Gentile nations to recognize and find God's salvation (Ps 67:1-2). God's salvation is good news for every day in every nation (1 Chr 16:23; Ps 96:2). The passage in Isaiah which leads up to Is 53 speaks of the fact that all nations see God's salvation through his revealed arm (Is 52:10; 53:1; cf. 51:5).

God's salvation is related to righteousness (Is 46:13; 51:6.8) and to his word (Ps 119:41.81). The Old Testament ideas about divine salvation can

3. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 448.

4. *ibid.*, p. 446-7.

5. *ibid.*, p. 221.

very aptly be summarized with the slogan "Salvation belongs to the LORD" (Ps 3:8; Jon 2:10).

God is Israel's Savior (Is 60:16; 43:3.15.17). There is no other savior (Is 43:11.12; Hos 13:4). God has not lost his power to save Israel, but their sins have blocked their access to God (Is 59:1-2; Jer 8:19-20; Jer 14:8.9). Quite on the contrary God is still mighty to save (Is 63:1), but to receive God's salvation the Israelites have to return to God and rest trusting in him (Is 30:15).

There are special promises of God to save Israel and Judah at the time of the end (Is 25:9; Is 35:4; Jer 30:7.10.11; Jer 31:7; Zep 3:17.19; Zec 9:16; 10:6). This salvation will be worked through the coming Christ (Jer 23:6; Jer 33:16; Ez 34:22-24; Ez 37:23-24; Zec 9:9; 12:7). God will deliver Israel from all their uncleannesses by sprinkling clean water on them and giving them a new heart and a new spirit (Ez 36:25-29) which seems to be the Old Testament equivalent of the teaching of Jesus about the new birth (John 3:3.5.10). God saves Israel to be a blessing amongst the nations (Zec 8:13).

God gives his salvation to the poor and the needy (Ps 12:6), to those who mourn (according to Eliphaz in Job 5:11), to those of pure heart (Ps 24:5), to those who are thankful towards God (Ps 50:23), to Jerusalem's priests (Ps 132:16).

The word salvation is also used in the sense of victory which belongs to the Lord (Prv 21:31). God gives victory over the enemy (Jgs 15:18; 1 Sm 11:9; 19:5); 2 Kgs 13:17).

God saves or helps ... Zion or Jerusalem (Ps 69:35; Is 49:25.26, his anointed king (Ps 20:7.9), Hezekiah (Is 38:20), the righteous sufferer of Ps 22:21, the poor (Ps 34:7, the low (Ps 116:6), the upright in heart (Ps 7:11), those who walk in integrity (Prv 28:18), the righteous (Ps 37:40), the crushed in spirit (Ps 34:18), sinners who repent and cry out to God for help from prison with forced labor and from deadly diseases (Ps 107:13.19), those who fear him and cry out to him (Ps 145:19), those who wait for the Lord (Prv 20:22), all the humble of the earth (Ps 76:9), those who seek

refuge from their adversaries at God's right hand (Ps 17:7), man and beast (Ps 36:6).

Prayers to God for salvation. People pray for Israel's salvation (1 Chr 16:35; Ps 108:6; Hb 1:2; 2 Chr 20:9.14-15). In Ps 80:3.7.18 we find the beautiful picture that we can get saved when God's face is shining kindly on us. There are many individual prayers to God for personal salvation from enemies, often found in a psalm of David (Ps 3:8; 31:2.16). In Ps 119 the prayer is to save me while I keep and that I keep your commandments (Ps 119:94.117.146).

The anointed King and salvation.

God's salvation is also a very important gift for the present anointed king and is especially often spoken of with regard to David and his offspring (2 Sm 22:51; Ps 20:5-6). God's salvation is granted to David or in prayer requested for him (2 Sm 22:3.36.47). The repenting David requests: "Restore to me the joy of your salvation" (51:12).

When David puts the ark in a tent in Jerusalem, he asks in his song the "God of our salvation" for deliverance from the nations (1 Chr 16:35). In Ps 65:5 David calls the Lord "God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas". According to the last words of David in 2 Sm 23:5 the eternal covenant of God with David is granting him all his desired salvation. God helps and saves the anointed king of the house of David (Ps 20:7; Hb 3:13).

God saves through judges and kings. More than once God saved his people from the enemies through his chosen judges (Jgs 2:16.18; 3:9.15.31 and through kings (1 Sm 9:16; 17:47).

God's salvation is also a key gift with regard to the coming anointed king, the Christ (2 Sm 22:51; Ps 22:1.21-22). The Christ is in person God's salvation to the ends of the earth and a covenant to the people of Israel (Is 49:6.8).

Things that do not save in themselves.

One can not get saved by Idols which are useless (Is 46:7; Jer 2:27.28; 11:12; Hos 13:4), by counselors practicing occultism (Is 47:13.15), by mere human kings and rulers Hos 13:10, by another nation (Hos 14:3; Lam 4:17), by good weapons or a strong army (Hos 1:7). Salvation or victory does not lie in military power or great weapons, but in God's hand (1 Sm 17:47; Ps 33:16; 44:3.6.7).

11.1.2 In the New Testament**The use of σώζω "to save, to heal".**

The verb σώζω sō(i)zō means "to keep safe, to protect, to save, to heal".⁶

God and "to save". Because God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tm 2:4) the believers should pray for all (1 Tm 2:1-3). "Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21) where the word "Lord" is the name of God in this quotation from Joel 2:32 and to call upon him means to call upon him in prayer. In Acts 2 "Lord" is also a title of Jesus Christ (2:34-36) and Paul clearly implies that it is the prayer to Jesus as Lord which saves (Rom 10:9-13).

Jesus predicts that God would cut short the days of the great tribulation of Jerusalem and Israel for the sake of the elect, otherwise "no human being would be saved" (Mt 24:22; Mk 13:20). According to Paul God "saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began" (2 Tm 1:9). In Tit 3:5 God saved us "not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit". Paul is confident that the Lord will rescue him from every evil deed and bring him safely into his heavenly

6. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 1579-80.

kingdom (2 Tm 4:18).⁷

James warns the believers not to judge others because there "is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy", namely God (Jas 4:12).

Jesus Christ and "to save". Jesus received his very name because he was destined to "save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). He came into the world to seek and save sinners (Lk 19:10; 1 Tm 1:15), and often those who seemed to be the greatest sinners, understood that best and were saved by their faith in him (Lk 7:50; 15:1-2). Jesus is the door through which the elect of God, his sheep, enter and get saved (Jn 10:9). In Jn 5:34 Jesus teaches in a way that the hearers may get saved.

To get saved it is necessary to have faith in the Lord Jesus (Acts 16:30,31). Because he lives forever he can save forever as a high priest interceding for his own (Hebrews 7:25). He saves us from God's wrath (Rom 5:9,10). God the Father did not send him "into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (Jn 3:17). Therefore even if anyone hears his words and does not keep them, he does not judge them; for he did not come to judge the world but to save the world (Jn 12:47). The confession of the apostle Peter before the Jewish rulers and elders and scribes gathered in Jerusalem has become a famous inspiration for world missions (Acts 4:12):

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

The link between the healing of the lame beggar at the Beautiful Gate of the temple in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:6-8,16) and this proclamation of worldwide salvation in the same name before the Jewish court is the fact that the Greek word *sōtēria* can mean both "salvation" and "healing" (= salvation from illness) and the Greek word *sō(i)zō* can mean both "to save" and "to heal".

7. ῥύσεται με ὁ κύριος ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔργου πονηροῦ καὶ σώσει εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐπουράνιον•

Therefore the healing miracles of Jesus Christ are also demonstrations of this power to save forever (Mt 9:21-22; Mk 5:28.34; Lk 8:48; Mk 5:23; Mk 10:52). This also includes the being healed from demon possession (Lk 8:36).

His saving people from danger of death in storm (Mt 8:25; Mt 14:30) and his making people alive (Lk 8:50) presents Jesus as a man with the power of God.

Christ did not save himself and he was not saved from death (Mt 27:40.42.49; Mk 15:30.31; Lk 23:35.37.39; Jn 12:27). But after his death he was saved from death by his resurrection in answer to his own prayers and his godliness before his death (Hebrews 5:7-10).

If anybody is saved, he is saved by God's grace or Christ's grace alone, not by his own effort or good works (Acts 15:11; Eph 2:5.8; 2 Tm 1:9).

Believers and "to save". There are servants of God who are committed to their calling so that others get saved (1 Cor 9:22; 10:33; 2 Cor 2:15; 1 Tm 4:16); Jas 5:20; Jude 1:22.23).

Jude warns in his letter that some of those who were saved from the slavery in Egypt were later destroyed in the desert because they did not trust God (Jude 1:5).

God can discipline believers even to the point of letting them die, but still his intention is that they may be saved in the end (1 Cor 3:15; 1 Cor 5:5). Peter writes to persecuted Christians in his first letter (1 Pt 4:17-18):

17 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

Therefore what is needed, is faith in Jesus Christ and perseverance.

Persevering faith and "to save". When Jesus healed somebody, he could point to their faith as having healed them⁸ (the woman suffering from a

8. ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε.

discharge of blood: Mt 9:22; Mk 5:34; Lk 8:48; blind Bartimaeus: Mk 10:52; Lk 18:42; the Samaritan amongst the 10 healed lepers (Lk 17:19). People with faith often received the desired healing (Mk 6:56; Acts 14:9).

To gain eternal salvation persevering faith in Jesus Christ to the end is crucial (Mt 10:22; 24:13; Mk 13:13). The disciple may look like destroying his life by clinging to Jesus, but in the end he will save his soul (Mt 16:25; Mk 8:35; Lk 9:24). The sinful woman of Luke 7:36-50 could go in peace, as Jesus told her, because her faith had saved her (Lk 7:50).

Faith leads to salvation, and lack of faith to condemnation (Mk 16:16). Saving faith is described by Paul as follows (Rom 10:9.13):

9 Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

According to Jas 2:14 it needs a living faith to get saved which proves itself alive by works. Saving faith in Christ has its origin in the preached word of God (Acts 11:14; 16:30.31; 1 Cor 1:18.21; 15:2; Jas 1:21).

Water baptism together with faith has a saving effect (Mk 16:16; 1 Pt 3:21). In hope we are already saved, but it is a not yet seen or fulfilled hope, it is a hope in the future redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:23-25).

People can be saved ... from illness Mt 9:21; Mk 6:56; Mk 10:52; Jn 11:12; Acts 4:9; Acts 14:9; Jas 5:15, from deadly illness or from death Mk 5:23; Lk 8:50, from drowning in water in a storm Mt 8:25; Mt 14:30; Acts 27:20.31, from a crooked generation Acts 2:40, from sins and eternal condemnation Mt 1:21; Lk 7:50; Lk 19:10; Jas 5:15, even on a Sabbath Mk 3:4; Lk 6:9, into the church Acts 2:47.

Israel and "to save" Israel as a nation has rejected the gospel and resisted even its being preached to the Gentiles (1 Thes 2:16). Paul loved his own nation and wanted them to be saved. One way to achieve this was for him that he preached to the Gentiles for the salvation of the Gentiles so that Israelites seeing this would become jealous and get saved as well (Rom

11:13-14). One great joy for Paul was his hope of the future salvation of Israel's remnant by the returning Christ after "the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (Rom 11:25-26; cf. 9:27).

The family and "to be saved". In a mixed family situation the believing part may perhaps not really know whether he will be able "to save" the partner who is not yet believing in Jesus Christ (1 Cor 7:16). But it is also true that if the gospel enters a household and meets with faith, the whole family can be saved causing great joy (Acts 11:14; 16:30.31).

Difficulties to get saved. Being rich (Mt 19:25; Mk 10:26; Lk 18:26), not understanding the word of God (Lk 8:12), lack of love for the truth (2 Thes 2:10), lack of striving to enter through the narrow door (Lk 13:23-24), disturbance because of wrong teaching (Acts 15:1).

The use of σωτήρ "savior".

The meaning of σωτήρ *sōtēr* is "savior, keeper, protector, liberator".⁹

God as Savior. God is Savior of his people (Lk 1:47; 1 Tm 1:1; Jude 1:25). Christian slaves should make the teaching of God our Savior look beautiful by their way of serving (Tit 2:10).

God is also savior of all men: According to 1 Tm 2:3-4 he wants to save all people and according to 1 Tm 4:10 he is the "the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe". In his "Institutes" Calvin understands the "all people" of 1 Tm 2:3-4 in the sense of "all kinds of people" including even some rulers:

He had commanded Timothy that prayers should be regularly offered up in the church for kings and princes; but as it seemed somewhat absurd that prayer should be offered up for a class of men who were almost hopeless (all of them being not only aliens from the body of Christ, but doing their utmost

9. See Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 1584.

to overthrow his kingdom), he adds, that it was acceptable to God, who will have all men to be saved. By this he assuredly means nothing more than that the way of salvation was not shut against any order of men; that, on the contrary, he had manifested his mercy in such a way, that he would have none debarred from it... But since it clearly appears that he is there speaking not of individuals, but of orders of men, let us have done with a longer discussion.¹⁰

In his commentary on the passage Calvin strongly rejects that this passage is against his understanding of a double predestination of some to get saved and others to perish:

Hence we see the childish folly of those who represent this passage to be opposed to predestination. "If God" say they, "wishes all men indiscriminately to be saved, it is false that some are predestined by his eternal purpose to salvation, and others to perdition." They might have had some ground for saying this, if Paul were speaking here about individual men; although even then we should not have wanted the means of replying to their argument; for, although the will of God ought not to be judged from his secret decrees, when he reveals them to us by outward signs, yet it does not therefore follow that he has not determined with himself what he intends to do as to every individual man.¹¹

But it is not possible to understand 1 Tm 4:10 in the same way Calvin understands 1 Tm 2:4 because of the contrast there between "of all people" on the one hand and "especially of those who believe" on the other. The "all people" here clearly means "all of mankind". Calvin consequently has to

10. John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2002), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.html>, p. 695.

11. See John Calvin, *Commentary on Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1999), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom43.html>, p. 32

weaken the word Savior in his understanding of 1 Tm 4:10 that it does not relate to eternal salvation but that it is "here a general term, and denotes one who defends and preserves. He means that the kindness of God extends to all men."¹²

We do not agree with Calvin here. According to our understanding these two sections in the same letter clearly point to a potential universalism of salvation according to the will of God or according to his being potentially the Savior of all. But it is still necessary to pray for all (1 Tm 2:1-3) and to preach the gospel to all (1 Tm 2:6-7). God as Savior gives his word to his servants so that salvation is preached (Tit 1:3). And added to this preaching the response of faith is necessary, the "coming to the knowledge of the truth" so that someone can be saved.

Christ as Savior. Christ is "Lord and Savior" or "God and Savior" (Lk 2:11; 2 Pt 1:1; 2 Pt 1:11; 2:20; 3:2; 3:18). Christ is especially the Savior of Israel (Acts 5:31; 13:23) but also of the whole world (Jn 4:42; 1 Jn 4:14). He is also the Savior of the church (Eph 5:23; Phil 3:20; Tit 1:4; 2:13). When Christ appeared "the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared" (Tit 3:4).

Jesus Christ is Savior from death and bringer of eternal life, being himself God (2 Tm 1:10). God the Father poured out the Holy Spirit on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior (Tit 3:6).

The use of σωτηρία "salvation".

The meaning of σωτηρία *sōtēria* is "salvation, protection, keeping safe".¹³

God and salvation. Salvation is God's (Rv 7:10; 12:10; Rv 19:1). By God's power born again people "are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pt 1:5). We should "count the patience of our Lord as salvation" (2 Pt 3:15).

12. See *ibid.*, p. 72.

13. See Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, p. 1584.

Paul gives thanks for the believers that God chose them "for salvation" (2 Thes 2:13). He endures "everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation" (2 Tm 2:10).

Christ and salvation. Jesus Christ is the "horn of salvation" in the house of David (Lk 1:69). The name of Jesus is the only name for salvation under heaven (Acts 4:12). In Acts 13:47 Paul quotes the prophecy about the servant of the Lord in Is 49:6 that the servant should be the salvation of God to the end of the earth and says that this is the command of the Lord to Paul and his team. I think, Paul understands this verse of Isaiah as a prophecy about Jesus Christ who is the salvation for all nations and therefore Paul is commanded to preach Jesus also to Gentiles (see Acts 13:46-48).

Believing in one's heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and confessing with one's mouth that "Jesus is Lord" is enough for justification and for salvation (Rom 10:9-10). According to Heb 2:3 Jesus the Lord started the New Testament teaching of salvation. God the Father made Jesus, the founder of the salvation of the believers, perfect through suffering (Heb 2:10)¹⁴. Salvation is God's and Christ's (Rv 7:10).

Israel and salvation. Salvation is from the Jews (Jn 4:22). Christ is the horn of salvation in the house of David (Lk 1:69) and salvation is also for Israel (Lk 1:71.77). Zacchaeus is a good example for a son of Abraham lost and then found by Jesus. Salvation came to his whole house (Lk 19:9). Paul always first went into a synagogue in a given place and preached salvation to the children of Abraham (Acts 13:14.26). His urgent desire and prayer for them was their salvation (Rom 10:1).

Gentiles and salvation. Because Israel as a whole nation has not accepted the gospel, "salvation has come to the Gentiles" (Rom 11:11). In this time until the second coming of Christ, Jesus has to be preached as the salvation of God to the ends of the earth (Acts 13:47).

14. Ἐπρεπεν γὰρ αὐτῷ... τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν διὰ παθημάτων τελεῖωσαι.

God's word and salvation. The Old Testament scriptures can help to salvation by faith in Jesus Christ (2 Tm 3:15). The Old Testament prophets were eagerly interested in the prophecies about the salvation of the New Testament times they had to deliver through the Spirit of Christ in them (1 Pt 1:10-12). God's preached word is a word of salvation (Acts 13:26), a gospel of salvation (Eph 1:13), is like good nourishing milk for young converts who are like Babies in Christ and should feed on the word of God that they may grow up to salvation (1 Pt 2:2).

God's servants and salvation. God uses his servants to preach salvation (Heb 2:3). In Philippi the slave girl who had a spirit of divination pointed to Paul and his team as preachers of the way of salvation, but this testimony was not acceptable in the eyes of Paul and he felt compelled to stop it by casting out this spirit (Acts 16:16-18).

God's true servants are prepared even to suffer for the salvation of others (2 Tm 2:10; 2 Cor 1:6). Paul is confident that his situation will turn out to his salvation by the intercession of the brothers and sisters in Philippi and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:19).

Faith and perseverance, hope and obedience. Faith and the confession of this faith is needed for salvation (Rom 10:10). Courageous faith is needed in times of persecution (Phil 1:28). Paul can encourage to work for one's own salvation in obedience (Phil 2:12). Obedience towards Christ is crucial for salvation (Heb 5:9) and to remain faithful to him (Heb 6:9-12).

Our perseverance in faith is also related to God's power in preserving us for salvation (1 Pt 1:5). It may be necessary to fight for the faith for the sake of salvation (Jude 1:3). It is even good to be sad if it leads to repentance and God and then salvation (2 Cor 7:10). The hope of salvation is like a helmet for the believer in his daily struggles (1 Thes 5:8).

Salvation can be ... salvation from slavery in Egypt through Moses (Acts 7:25), salvation of the family of Noah for which he built the ark (Heb 11:7), salvation from dying in the storm and drowning (Acts 27:34), salvation

from eternal condemnation and the wrath of God (Rom 1:16; 1 Thes 5:9), salvation of souls (1 Pt 1:9), forgiveness of sins (Lk 1:77; cf. Heb 9:28).

Times and Salvation. Salvation can only happen at a time when God has granted a day of salvation (2 Cor 6:2). Paul believes in the progress of salvation history and salvation coming nearer and nearer. Therefore we should be alert and spiritually awake (Rom 13:11).

The use of σωτήριος, ον "bringing salvation".

The meaning of the adjective σωτήριος, ον *sōtēriōs, ōn* is "bringing salvation".¹⁵ It is used in Tit 2:11 and speaks of God's grace as having appeared in Jesus Christ in person:

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,¹⁶ 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

This adjective in the neuter form is also used as a noun τὸ σωτήριον *sōtēriōn* with the meaning of "means of salvation, salvation".¹⁷ It speaks of God's salvation for Israel and the nations (Luke 2:29-32; 3:6¹⁸; Acts 28:28). In Eph 6:17 every single believer needs "the helmet of salvation" as part of his spiritual armor. Every believer can trust in the reality of his being saved which protects him from the attacks of the enemy and helps him to stand even "on an evil day" (Eph 6:13).

15. See Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 1587.

16. Ἐπεφάνη γὰρ ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ σωτήριος πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις

17. See Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 1587.

18. Luke 3:4-6 is quoting Is 40:3-6.

11.2 Atonement – Sacrifice and Forgiveness of Sin

11.2.1 Atonement in the Old Testament

Words used.

In Hebrew the noun used for atonement is *kippurîm*¹⁹. It is used for the very important holy "day of the atonement" (Lv 23:27-28; 25:9)²⁰; for the "atonement money" which had to be given in a census "to make atonement for your lives" (Ex 30:16); for "the sin offering of atonement" (Ex 30:10; Nm 29:11) and "the ram of atonement" (Nm 5:8).

The most important Hebrew verb for "to atone" is the *Pi'el* "kipper"²¹ which means "to pacify, make propitiation"²². In Gn 32:20 Jacob wants to pacify his brother Esau with a present: "I may appease him with the present that goes ahead of me, and afterward I shall see his face. Perhaps he will accept me." In Prv 16:14 it has a very similar meaning: "A king's wrath is a messenger of death, and a wise man will appease it."²³

The theological use of this verb with regard to God can be understood in the same way: Sins or impurity of man could endanger his good relationship with God, kindle the wrath of God. Therefore the sins or the impurity need to be "atoned" for so that the covenant relationship is uphold undisturbed. Atonement makes forgiveness possible (e.g. Lv 4:20).

19. כִּפּוּרִים

20. The LXX version translates *ἡμερα εξιλασμου* or *ἡμερα του ιλασμου*. For *ἱλασμός* *hilasmōs* in the LXX see Lv 25:9; Nm 5:8; Ps 130:4; Ez 44:27; Dn 9:9 and Amos 8:14.

21. כִּפָּר

22. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 497-498. The LXX version uses very often *ἐξιλασκομαι* where *kipper* is used in Hebrew.

23. In Is 28:18 the verb is used with the meaning to annul ("then your covenant with death will be annulled") and in Is 47:11 Babylon can not "avert" the disaster falling on her ("disaster shall fall upon you, for which you will not be able to atone").

Means of making atonement.

1. Blood is the ordained means of atonement and shall not be eaten (Lv 17:11).
2. Burnt offering (עֹלָה 'ōlāh Lv 1:3-4; 9:7; 12:6-8; 14:18-31; 15:15.30; Nm 6:11; Ez 45:15.17),
3. sin offering (חַטָּאת ḥaṭṭā't Lv 4:20; 5:6; 9:7; 12:6-8; 14:18-31; 15:15.30; Nm 6:11; 15:25.28; 28:22.30; 29:52; 2 Chr 29:23-24; Neh 10:32-33; Ez 43:20.26; 45:15.17.19-20),
4. guilt offering (אֲשָׁם 'āšām Lv 5:16.18; 6:7; 7:7; 14:18-31; 19:22),
5. incense (קֶטֶרֶת qəṭōreṭ Nm 16:46-47; 1 Chr 6:49),
6. grain offering (מִנְחָה minḥāh Ez 45:15.17),
7. peace offerings (שְׁלָמִים šəlāmîm Ez 45:15.17).

Priests and atonement.

Only an ordained priest can present atoning sacrifices (Lv 16:32.33; 5:6; 10:17; Nm 15:25.28). When the high priest (and his sons) are consecrated for seven days, atonement has to be made for the altar and the high priest (Ex 29:36.37; Lv 8:15.34). They have to eat those things with which atonement was made at their ordination and consecration (Ex 29:33). They also eat the sin offerings and the guilt offerings on a regular basis (Lv 7:7), but not such sin offerings "from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place" (Lv 6:30; also 16:27). Somebody who presents a burnt offering lays his hands "on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him". Then the animal is killed and "the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar" (Lv 1:4-5).

Times for atonement.

The holy days of Israel were also special days of making atonement for the Israelites. In the week of eating unleavened bread the priests had to

sacrifice "one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you" (Nm 28:17.22). On the day of Pentecost they had to offer "one male goat, to make atonement for you" (Nm 28:26.30) and on the first day of the seventh month, the day of blowing the trumpets, they sacrificed "one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you" (Nm 29:1.5).

But the most important day of the year with regard to atonement was "the day of atonement" (Lv 23:27-28; 25:9). The atonement of this day was so important that it was a day of fasting (Lv 16:29-30) and a day of rest without any work (Lv 23:28). The high priest had to offer sacrifices to atone for himself and his house (Lv 16:6.11.24) and for the people and the Holy Place (Lv 16:15-16.17.24; 16:30.32.33.34 and for the altar (Ex 30:10; Lv 16:18).

The high priest needed "a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering" for himself (16:3). The people of Israel had to give him "two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering" (16:5). Aaron had first to sacrifice the bull for himself and his house and take some of the blood of the bull into the most holy place and and "sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat on the east side, and in front of the mercy seat ... sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times" (14).

The decision which of the two goats was for the Lord and which for Azazel was made by lot (8). The goat for the Lord was sacrificed as sin offering (16:15-19):

15 Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. 16 Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses... 18 Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the Lord and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. 19 And he shall sprinkle some of

the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it and consecrate it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel.

That the sprinkling of the blood is done "seven times" symbolizes the complete and perfect atoning and cleansing. The other "goat on which the lot fell for Azazel" which was "presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it", was then "sent away into the wilderness to Azazel" (Lv 16:10.20-22). There was a special act of confessing the sins related to this goat:

21 And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. 22 The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.

We note that the priest's responsibility was to confess all known sins of Israel while making atonement for them. Afterwards the priest had to wash and clean himself (16:23-24) and offer his own burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people "and make atonement for himself and for the people" and burn "the fat of the sin offering" on the altar (16:24-25). We also should make a mental note of the content of 16:27 to come back to this later:

And the bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. Their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be burned up with fire.

Because this sin offering is the only offering of which the blood was carried and sprinkled at the mercy seat, we can say that this was the most important offering with regard to atonement in the Old Testament.

The highest day of atonement imaginable in the Old Testament is the day of atonement with which the year of jubilee starts which was celebrated after 50 years (Lv 25:9-10):

9 Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall

sound the trumpet throughout all your land. 10 And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.²⁴ It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan.

The word for the proclaimed liberty is *dərôr* and is found in these texts: Lv 25:10; Is 61:1; Jer 34:8.15.17; Ez 46:17; Ex 30:23).

Places for atonement.

The place for atonement was the presence of the Lord which was first the tabernacle and later the temple in the Old Testament. We learn from 1 Chr 6:49 that especially two places were important in the tabernacle area for every day atonement during the year:

But Aaron and his sons made offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense for all the work of the Most Holy Place, and to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded.

These two altars were related to atonement during the year and the normal feasts. But the most important place of atonement is the "mercy seat" (ESV for **כַּפֹּרֶת** *kappōret*)²⁵ which is God's movable throne on earth placed in the most holy place on the ark of the covenant and representing God's throne in heaven. We have just seen that on the day of atonement this is the place where the blood of the sin offerings is brought and sprinkled towards and that happens only once a year. It is the only occasion when one of the Israelites is allowed to enter the most holy place. Only the high priest is permitted here. The following quote from the law of God shows the great significance of the mercy seat (Ex 25:21-22):

24.

וּקְרָאתֶם דְּרוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ לְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל

25. See Ex 25:17.18.20.21; 25:22; 26:34; 30:6; 31:7; 35:12; 37:6.7.8.9; 39:35; 40:20; Lv 16:2; 16:13.14.15; Nm 7:89; 1 Chr 28:11. The LXX version often translates *kappōret* with ἱλαστήριον *hilastērion*, see Ex 25:17.18.19.20.21.22; 31:7; 35:12; 37:6.8.9; Lv 16:2.13.14.15; Nm 7:89; (Ez 43:14.17.20).

21 And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. 22 There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.

The mercy seat is the place where God thrones over the cherubim (Ps 80:1; 99:1; 18:10). Wherever the cherubim are mentioned, they are found belonging to the presence of God. Before falling in sin man enjoyed the presence of God in paradise (Gn 3:8). But after Adam and Eve had sinned, God "drove out the man and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life" (Gn 3:24). There are several hints that the tabernacle brings back the presence of God to man, that it is indeed "paradise regained" (Ex 25:8-9.40; 26:30; Heb 8:5). The golden lampstand seems to be part of a garden (Ex 25:33). Cherubim are not only visible over the mercy seat, but also in other places of the tabernacle (Ex 26:1). In the temple of Solomon there are also clear elements pointing to the paradise garden of the presence of God with cherubim in it (1 Kgs 6:27-35).

In agreement with the promise in Ex 25:22 the speaking of God to Moses in the book of Leviticus happens "from the tent of meeting" (Lv 1:1; cf. Nm 7:89). The fact that God thrones over the ark of the testimony in which the stone tablets with the ten words (the testimony) will be placed, shows him to be a God of justice and righteousness who has based his kingdom on these virtues (cf. Dt 32:4; Is 9:6-7). The people of God should reflect his holiness and perfection (Lv 19:2; Gn 17:1). Therefore any breaking of his commandments or any falling short of fitting purity and holiness needs atonement. And the most important place where this should happen, is the place where he reveals himself and meets Israel represented in the chosen servants of God (Ex 30:6; Lv 16:2). It is also of the highest significance that the most holy place of the temple is called "the room (or the house) for the mercy seat" in 1 Chr 28:11.

Atonement for whom and for what?

The high priest atones for himself and the people (Lv 9:7). Atonement is necessary for the mother after giving birth to a son or daughter (Lv 12:7.8); for the leper who was healed to cleanse him (Lv 14:18.19.20; Lv 14:21.29.31); for a house which has been healed from a leprous disease to cleanse it (Lv 14:53); for him who has a discharge (Lv 15:15); for a woman who has a discharge of blood for many days to cleanse her after her becoming well again (Lv 15:30); for a man with the vow of a Nazirite "if any man dies very suddenly beside him" (Nm 6:9.11); for the whole tribe of the Levites at the time of their consecration²⁶ (Nm 8:12-14.21).

Aaron atoned with his censer and incense for the people who rebelled against him and Moses Nm 16:46-47. "Phinehas the son of Eleazar ... was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel" and got the covenant of a perpetual priesthood (Nm 25:11-13). After the victory over the Midianites the officers of the army of Israel "brought the Lord's offering, what each man found, articles of gold, armlets and bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and beads, to make atonement for ourselves before the Lord", because they had lost not one man in action and realized that this was God's special protection (Nm 31:50).

After Israel had sinned in the incident with the golden calf Moses went up to the Lord to try to atone for the sin of the golden calf (Ex 32:30). It is interesting to see what he offers to atone for their sin and what the Lord answers him (Ex 32:31-33):

31 So Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Alas, this people have sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. 32 But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written." 33 But the Lord said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book."²⁷

26. God has "given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the people of Israel, to do the service for the people of Israel at the tent of meeting and to make atonement for the people of Israel" (Nm 8:19).

27.

מִי אֲשֶׁר חָטָא-לִי אֶמְחֶנּוּ מִסֵּפֶרִי:

The best interpretation of this mysterious book is that it is the book of life.²⁸ Moses offers his eternal life in exchange for the forgiveness of the sins of about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children (Ex 12:37; cf. Paul's intercession in Rom 9:1-3). Anything else would not have weighed enough according to his own estimate. He was over eighty at the time of this plea (Ex 7:7; 40:17) which was according to his own psalm what a man could expect to live and not much longer (Ps 90:10). But God rejects this offer and at the same time does not consume them as threatened before (Ex 32:10). Later the tabernacle is built as planned before and the sacrificial system of atonement is inaugurated. God in his sovereignty accepted the intercession of Moses (cf. Ex 32:14)²⁹ and kept Israel alive.

God's sovereignty and atonement.

God himself atones for sins (Ps 65:3; Ez 16:63), being compassionate (Ps 78:38; 79:8-9) and in answer to the prayer of Hezekiah at the special Passover (2 Chr 30:18-20). God makes atonement for his land, his people (Dt 32:43).

God can decide that certain sins will not be atoned for and so not forgiven, for example the iniquity of Eli's house (1 Sm 3:14) and the sin of the Jerusalemites that they feast instead of repenting (Is 22:14). Jeremiah prayed that the sin of plotting his assassination may not be atoned for by God (Jer 18:23).

Prophesied future Atonement.

There are several interesting Old Testament prophecies which point beyond the Old Testament sacrificial system and towards Christ. David realized that God does not really delight in animal sacrifices, but looks at the heart and spirit of the repentant sinner (Ps 51:16-17). Ps 110 is a psalm of David where "his Lord" is invited to sit at the right hand of God to be the king of the world and "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (110:1.4). Because the office of atonement is in the hands of the ordained priests this

28. Cf. Ps 69:28; Dn 12:1; Is 4:3; Mal 3:16; Lk 10:20; Phil 4:3; Rv 13:8; 17:8; 20:12

29. LXX: και ιλασθη κυριος περι της κακιας ης ειπεν ποιησαι τον λαον αυτου

eternal priest and king would mean an enormous change of the system (cf. Heb 7:11-28).

Isaiah experienced that one of the seraphim touched his mouth with the live coal and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for" (Is 6:7). The prophet explains this visionary element later in 53:5-6:

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his stripes we are healed.
6 All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned every one to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The live coal in Is 6:6-7 had been taken from the altar in the vision. The altar is the place where sacrifices are placed, blood is sprinkled and atonement is made. Is 53 shows the servant of the Lord, Christ, who has given his life as an guilt offering (53:10) when "he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people" (53:8). He even sprinkles many nations (with his blood) to cleanse them and save them (52:15; 53:11-12). A combination of Is 6 and 53 leads us to see the glory of Christ as Isaiah saw it according to Jn 12:37-41. It is also important to note that the servant of the Lord is also in his own person "a covenant for the people" (Is 42:6; cf. 54:10; 55:3).

In Is 61:1-2 the coming Christ uses the language of the jubilee to "proclaim the year of the Lord's favor". While the normal year of jubilee could perhaps be celebrated twice in a lifetime of 70 or 80 years, this "year of the Lord's favor" proclaimed by the coming Christ would be unique in all of salvation history. It would be the ultimate fulfillment of all days of atonement and of all years of jubilee (cf. Lk 4:16-21).

Jeremiah promises a new covenant for the future where God will write his will not on stone tablets but on the hearts of the Israelites and will forgive their sins (Jer 31:31-34; cf. Heb 8:6-13). He also mentions that the name of the coming Christ from the house of David, the "righteous Branch" will be:

"The Lord is our righteousness" (23:5; cf. 33:15-16 where the same name is given to Jerusalem).

In Zec 3:8-9 we have the "servant of the Lord", the "Branch", a "stone with seven eyes" and God's promise, "I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day". It is possible to understand the "Branch" in Zec 6:9-15 as the Christ who will combine the offices of king and priest and who will build the temple of God in a magnificent way. Zec 9:9-11 mention the coming Christ to Zion mounted on a donkey and the blood of God's covenant with Zion because of which the prisoners are freed "from the waterless pit". In Zec 12:10 God pours out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy and consequently they look on God whom they have pierced and mourn for him weeping bitterly. The result of this revival is):

13,1 On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

If we combine all these passages of Zechariah it seems that this prophet already proclaimed the coming Christ as the suffering Christ and God in one person. He would be pierced and thus killed. To recognize him would result in receiving forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. They would see him alive and in divine glory (cf. Zec 14:3-4).

Daniel 9:24 speaks of atonement in the last days with these words:

24 Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.³⁰

It is clear from this little survey of prophesied future atonement within the Old Testament that this first great part of the Bible was looking forward to a time when God would solve the problem of sin and of atonement once and for all time.

30. שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעִים נְחָתָהּ עַל-עַמָּךְ וְעַל-עִיר קִדְשֶׁךָ לְכַלֵּא הַפֶּשַׁע וּלְחַתֵּם חַטָּאוֹת וּלְכַפֵּר עֲוֹן וּלְהָבִיא צֶדֶק עַל-לְמִים וּלְחַתֵּם חֲזוֹן וּנְבִיא וּלְמַשֵּׁחַ קֹדֶשׁ קִדְשִׁים:

11.2.2 Atonement in the New Testament

Most of the subject of atonement in the New Testament can be covered by following all the verses in their context where the blood of Jesus Christ is mentioned. The blood of Christ means here the shed blood of Christ that is his sacrificed life (cf. Lv 17:10-11). We start with Christ's own teaching about the importance of his blood which is found in the institution of the Lord's supper. We know that Jesus taught that he had come to fulfill the law and the prophets (Mt 5:17-20) and that he especially saw his suffering as a fulfillment of prophecies (Mt 26:54.56). Therefore the best background to interpret the following words of Jesus about the significance of his death is the Old Testament.

The Lord's supper.

The Lord's supper, as it is instituted by Jesus himself, shows us Christ's own view of his death and how he wanted it to be remembered by the church until his second coming. Let us look at the fourfold testimony of the apostles about the words of Jesus when he presented the cup and spoke of his own blood:

Mt 26:28	Mk 14:24	Lk 22:20	1 Cor 11:25
for this is	This is	This cup that is poured out for you	This cup is
my blood of the covenant,	my blood of the covenant,	is the new covenant in my blood.	the new covenant in my blood.
which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.	which is poured out for many.		

Mt 26:28	Mk 14:24	Lk 22:20	1 Cor 11:25
28 τοῦτο γάρ	Τοῦτό ἐστιν	Τοῦτο τὸ	Τοῦτο τὸ
ἐστιν		ποτήριον	ποτήριον
τὸ αἶμά μου	τὸ αἶμά μου	ἡ καινὴ	ἡ καινὴ
τῆς διαθήκης	τῆς διαθήκης	διαθήκη ἐν τῷ	διαθήκη ἐστὶν
		αἵματί μου,	ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ
			αἵματι•
τὸ περὶ	τὸ	τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν	
πολλῶν	ἐκχυννόμενον	ἐκχυννόμενον.	
ἐκχυννόμενον	ὑπὲρ πολλῶν.		
εἰς ἄφεσιν			
ἁμαρτιῶν•			

The first thing to note here is that Jesus gave us the Lord's supper at the occasion of the last supper which was a passover meal. The bread used to symbolize his body was taken from the bread of the passover meal. The cup with the wine was actually one of the cups used for the passover meal. This means that Jesus identifies himself as the lamb of the passover (cf. Jn 19:36; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pt 1:13.19-20). We remember that the basic salvation of the Old Testament is that the Lord saved Israel from the slavery in Egypt (Ex 20:2). And the consummation of this saving act was the protection of Israel by the blood of the passover lamb put on the door posts of their houses during the tenth plague. That was the night when they could finally leave Egypt.

According to all four witnesses Jesus understood the shedding of his blood as inaugurating a covenant. Luke and Paul specify this as the "new covenant" which points to Jer 31:31-34, and Matthew adds "for the forgiveness of sins" which is also found in Jer 31:31-34 (see section 11.2.1). As Jer 31:31-34 itself speaks of the Sinai covenant and Jesus uses the words "the blood of the covenant" which is found exactly so in Ex 24:8 we can see Ex 24:1-11 as another text shedding light on the words of Jesus.

This means that Jesus saw himself bringing a covenant of enormous importance, only to be compared with the covenant of Sinai which was the foundation from the time of Moses until the time of Jesus. The shedding of his blood would inaugurate a new time with a covenant which is even of greater importance and durability as the Sinai covenant. It is the new covenant ushering in the new world which lasts for ever.

As we have seen above, there was another line of prophecies in Isaiah about the servant of the Lord being himself in person "a covenant for the people" (Is 42:6; cf. 54:10; 55:3). We know from Lk 22:37 that Jesus understood Is 53:12 as pointing to himself. In Is 52:13-53:12 it is mentioned that "many" will profit from the sacrifice of the servant: He "shall ... sprinkle many nations" purifying them before God (52:15). "By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many" (53:11-12). The statement of Jesus that his blood is "poured out for many" is best understood with Isaiah in mind.

If we combine all this we get the picture that Jesus saw his own death at the cross (Jn 12:23-24.31-33; Mt 16:21.24) as the beginning of the new era of the new covenant of Jer 31 and himself as the branch of David of Jer 33:15-16 to save Jerusalem and Judah. He further understood himself as the servant of the Lord who gives his life for Israel and many amongst the nations being himself "light of the nations" (Is 42:6) and "salvation ... to the end of the earth" (Is 49:6).

John does not mention the institution of the Lord's supper but he seems to presuppose its knowledge already given by Matthew, Mark and Luke. When Jesus presents himself in John 6:51 as "the living bread that came down from heaven", and explains that the bread that he "will give for the life of the world" is his "flesh", it is reasonable to relate this speech to the Lord's supper. "Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (Jn 6:54; cf. 6:53.55.56). According to 6:63 the eating has to be spiritual to be useful. The eating happens by coming to him and believing in him (6:35).

In John 19:34-35 the side of the crucified Jesus is pierced so that blood and water comes out which proves his death in the flesh. Then Jesus is identified as the true passover lamb of which no bone should be broken (19:36; cf. 1:29; Ex 12:46) and as the pierced Lord God of Zec 12:10 (19:37) by whose recognizing they will receive the Holy Spirit and the cleansing from sin and uncleanness (Zec 13:1).

The witness of John the Baptist in John 1:29, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" seems to relate to Is 53:6-7. John himself knows of the identity of Jesus because the Spirit came down

on Jesus after his water baptism and stayed on him (John 1:32-34). The voice of God the Father said at this opportunity, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Mk 1:11; cf. Lk 3:22). This was a testimony of the Father for his son. It also seems to have been a witness for John the Baptist about the identity of Jesus (Mt 3:17). The Father here combined Ps 2:7 and Is 42:1 and thus identified Jesus with the coming Christ of Ps 2 and with the servant of the Lord in Isaiah 42:1. Because the calling of John was based on Is 40:3 (John 1:23), John must have studied this book very well. If Jesus was God's servant of Is 42:1, he also was the servant of Is 53:6-7, he was the lamb of God carrying away the sin of all and atoning for them.

Paul sees the Lord's supper as "a participation" in the blood and in the body of Christ (1 Cor 10:15-16). "Whoever ... eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord... For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died" (1 Cor 11:27,29-30). This reminds of certain texts in the Old Testament where profaning the sacred also led to judgment of the offenders (e.g. Lv 10:1-3; 1 Sm 2:12-17,22; 2 Sm 6:6-7,12-13).

Paul speaks in Acts 20:28 of "the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood".³¹ Here, of course, the blood of Jesus Christ is in mind, but it is called God's blood which presupposes that Jesus Christ is God incarnate.

Some other sections in Paul's letters.

The apostle Paul speaks of the blood of Christ in very important contexts which are all related to salvation. After Paul had proven all men, Jews and Gentiles, to be under sin in Rom 1:18-3:20, he starts to teach about the righteousness of God in 3:21-26:

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested

31. προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ, ἐν ᾧ ὑμᾶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους, ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἣν περιεποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου.

apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it - 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.³² 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Paul explains the genitive "the righteousness of God" in 3:26 both as "that he might be just" and as "the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus". Both aspects of God's righteousness could have been questioned. God's own being just could have been questioned "because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins". God's forbearance made it possible for many sinners to go on sinning without being visibly punished (see Ps 73:1-17). This raised the question of a just government of the world and whether there is a just God ruling everything. Paul says that the cross and the blood of Christ answer this question. The question whether God can bestow his righteousness on repenting sinners is also answered by the same sacrificial death of Christ who shed his blood to atone for the sins of all sinners.

The fact that all "fall short of the glory of God" means that "all fall short of the honor or acknowledgement of God". It is the glory or honor that God bestows on man (as in John 12:43): "Well done!" God can not say this to sinners. He can not acknowledge them. But their sins can be forgiven, if they put their faith in the blood of Christ that was shed for them.

For our subject of atonement 3:25 is important and shows how the shed blood of Christ, that means his death at the cross, is the source of salvation for Jews and Gentiles. God put Christ forward as "a propitiation by his

32. 24 δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ• 25 ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον διὰ πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων.

blood, to be received by faith". The Greek word translated here with "propitiation" is *hilastērion* which was the normal translation of the Hebrew word for "mercy seat" in the LXX. The only other time it is used in the New Testament it clearly means the "mercy seat" (Heb 9:5). Paul seems to think of the day of the atonement when the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled on and towards the mercy seat (see section 11.2.1). We have seen that Isaiah 61:1-2 presents the coming Christ as bringing the super jubilee year with the special day of atonement. Good Friday was the day of days with regard to atonement. It was the day God was looking forward to throughout all of sinful human history to put the sin of the world on the lamb of God (Is 53:6-7; Jn 1:29; 2 Cor 5:18-21).

According to Eph 2:13 believing Gentiles are brought near to God by the blood of Christ (cf. Is 52:15). 2 Cor 5:18-21 is a very important section about reconciliation, but it is also significant with regard to the subject of atonement, especially the last verses (2 Cor 5:20-21):

20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin,³³ so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The decisive phrase for our subject is "he made him to be sin who knew no sin". Now to understand this passage it is helpful to know that the word for sin and for sin offering is the same in certain contexts of the Old Testament. We have seen above that the sin offering is *ḥaṭṭā'at* in Hebrew (חַטָּאת) for example in Lv 4:20, 5:6 and 9:7. The LXX translates it in all these verses with the Greek word for "sin", ἁμαρτία *hamartia* which here in these verses in Leviticus, of course, means "sin offering".

The same meaning can be understood in 2 Cor 5:21:³⁴ "For our sake he made him to be a sin offering who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Rom 8:3 is a close parallel: "By sending

33. τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν

34. So with F. F. Bruce, 1 and 2 Corinthians, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 210.

his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh." The phrase "for sin"³⁵ here can also be understood "as a sin offering" (cf. Is 53:10 in the LXX). The idea of Paul is that the death of Christ at the cross is the atonement of the sins of the whole world, because God was in him when he was sacrificed as a sin offering. Therefore the whole world is now potentially reconciled with God in Christ. But every single person has to accept the death of Jesus Christ as his reconciliation with God to get the benefit of it.

Christ's blood in Hebrews

The letter to the Hebrews is deeply rooted in the Old Testament language, imagery and sacrificial system. According to Hebrews 2:14-18 God's purpose in the incarnation of his son was atonement through his death:

Hebrews 2:14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

In becoming flesh, Jesus took his share in flesh and blood, lived a holy life and then offered himself with his blood in his death as an atoning sacrifice to God (2:14), destroying the power of the devil (cf. Jn 12:31; 16:11; Col 2:14-15; Rv 12:10-11), atoning for the sins of the people (Heb 2:17)³⁶. The devil or Satan is the accuser of the people of God. "Accuser" is the meaning of the Hebrew שָׂטָן śāṭān and the Greek διάβολος diabōlōs. His whole

35. περὶ ἁμαρτίας peri hamartias

36. εἰς τὸ ἱλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ

power of accusing people is based on their not forgiven sins. If the sins are atoned for, the power base of the devil is destroyed, he himself loses his area of activity. Death is related to sin, because "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). Perhaps because the devil had tempted and brought mankind in Adam and Eve into sin, he came into the position to be the one "who had the power of death", of course under God's sovereign rule.

In Heb 9 the writer first talks about the sacrificial system of the tabernacle and the use of blood there (Heb 9:7) and then he presents the better service of Christ bringing the new covenant (Heb 9:11-15):

11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. 13 For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. 15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

On the day of atonement the Old Testament high priest had to enter the most holy place of the tabernacle with the blood of the sin offering. Christ entered not the earthly tent, but the heavens themselves to come into the presence of God the Father by means of his own blood. And this happened "once for all". The earthly high priest entered once a year and left again until next year. Jesus entered the heavens to stay, to sit at the right hand of the Father. On earth the blood of many sacrifices was offered, year after year, but now the blood of Christ has been offered

once and for all.³⁷ It is unique, not to be repeated, it is valid for ever, for all eternity.

In Heb 9:16-21 the writer uses the fact that the word for covenant and the word for testament is one and the same in Greek and so explains that somebody or some animal had to die to make the covenant or testament valid which also shows the importance of blood in inaugurating the covenant (see Heb 9:18.19.20.21). Then he further explains the necessity of blood for atonement and forgiveness and the importance of Christ's blood in this context (Heb 9:22-26):

22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. 23 Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. 25 Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, 26 for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

After pointing out that the blood of animals never really took away sins (Hebrews 10:3-4) the writer encourages us to enter into the heavenly presence of God by trusting the power of the blood of Jesus (Heb 10:19-22):

19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over

37. Cf. Heb 7:27; 9:12.26.28; 10:10; Rom 6:10; 1 Pt 3:18.

the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

At the time of Christ's death the curtain in the temple was torn apart from top to bottom (Mt 27:50-51; Mk 15:37-38) showing that this was a work of God himself. This passage in Hebrews now explains the spiritual meaning of this deed of God: The way to the most holy place is no longer blocked. The curtain was a typological symbol of the body of Christ, of his flesh. When his flesh was broken, when he died, the hindrance was removed. Now we can enter. Not only our high priest, Christ, but we in Christ in the Holy Spirit enter into the heavenly presence, nowadays in prayer and giving thanks, and hereafter forever, sprinkled in our hearts with the "blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (Heb 12:22-24; cf. Is 52:15). This blood is so important that to view this holy "blood of the covenant" as profane would be blocking the way to the Father for ever (Heb 10:29; 13:20).

The fact that the bodies of the sin offerings on the day of atonement were burned outside the camp is typologically related to the suffering of Jesus outside the gates of Jerusalem. Therefore we as believers should join him there in his rejection and shame (Heb 13:11-13).

Christ's blood in the catholic epistles.

Peter writes his first letter to those "who are elect exiles ... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood" (1 Pt 1:1-2; cf. 1:18). John speaks in the beginning and in the end of his first letter of the blood of Christ. If we walk in God's light, then "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn 1:7). This happens, if "we confess our sins" (1:9). Jesus Christ "came by water and blood" (1 Jn 5:6.8). The "blood" points to the death of Jesus at the cross (see John 19:34-35). He was a real human being with blood and flesh, God's Word incarnate (John 1:1-3.14), and dying he became a sacrifice atoning for the world's sin (1 Jn 2:1-2):

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so

that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.³⁸

The Greek word used in 1 Jn 2:2 and also 1 Jn 4:10 is *hilasmōs* which is the exact word used in the LXX as translation for the Hebrew word for atonement. Both 1 Jn 2:2 and Jn 1:29 present the potential efficiency of the atoning salvation of Christ's blood as universal. But the sacrifice has to be accepted by faith. Faith is necessary for salvation (Jn 3:16). John does not only put an emphasis on the importance of the blood of Christ in his gospel and his letters but also in Revelation.

Christ's blood in Revelation.

One of the main titles of Christ in Revelation is the lamb.³⁹ Christ loved us and freed us from our sins by his blood⁴⁰ (Rv 1:5). As a sacrificial lamb he was slaughtered and by his blood he "ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rv 5:9). The people who arrive in the New Jerusalem in the presence of God "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rv 7:14). They have conquered Satan "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death" (Rv 12:11).

11.3 Redemption and Ransom

This subject is very closely related to the subject of atonement we have just looked at. One reason for this is that the price which was paid to ransom

38. καὶ αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου.

39. τὸ ἀρνίον *arniōn*. See Rv 5:6; 5:8; 5:12; 5:13; 6:1; 6:16; 7:9; 7:10; 7:14; 7:17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1; 14:4; 14:10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7; 19:9; 21:9; 21:14; 21:22; 21:23; 21:27; 22:1; 22:3. Both the beast and the false prophet of Rv 13 imitate the lamb. The beast as having been slain and coming to life again (13:3; cf. 5:6) and the false prophet as having "two horns like a lamb" 13:11.

40. λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ

us or redeem us, is the blood of Christ. Another reason for this is that more than once both ideas are combined in the New Testament in one context. As we have seen, atonement is necessary for us so that our sins or our impurity do not kindle the wrath of God. It is necessary to uphold a friendly covenant relationship with God. The Greek vocabulary which is used in the New Testament for redemption or ransom was originally used for freeing a prisoner or slave by paying ransom money.⁴¹ Consequently redemption in this original Greek sense implies that somebody is redeemed from some kind of slavery, be it the slavery of Egypt or the slavery of sin.

But, as we think, more important than the original Greek background of these New Testament words is their background in the use of the Old Testament in Hebrew. The LXX translated Hebrew words with Greek vocabulary. We still can see what Hebrew words have been translated by the LXX with what Greek words. And we can analyze what possible meanings the Hebrew words could have.

11.3.1 Redemption and Ransom in the Old Testament

The Hebrew word כֹּפֶר *kōṭer*

is sometimes translated by the LXX with λύτρον *lytrōn* and means "ransom, ransom money", but in Hebrew it is not necessarily money to free slaves. It is used in other contexts as well. In Ex 21:30 ransom money can be paid by the owner of a dangerous bull which killed somebody because of the carelessness of the owner. The ransom money saves the owner from the death penalty. In a census each shall give a ransom for his life to the LORD (Ex 30:12), "that there be no plague among them when you number them".

It has to be noted that *kōṭer* can be traced back to the same root⁴² as

41. See the explanation of ἡ ἀπολύτρωσις *apōlytrōsis* in Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 190. The word for ransom money is τό λύτρον *lytrōn*, *ibid.*, p. 954. λυτρόω *lytrōō* is originally to free by paying ransom, *ibid.*, p. 954. ἡ λύτρωσις *lytrōsis* is both setting free, redemption and the money paid for setting somebody free, *ibid.*, p. 954-955. ὁ λυτρωτής *lytrōtēs* is the redeemer, *ibid.*, p. 955.

42. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 497.

the Hebrew words for "atonement" (kippurîm), "to atone" (kipper) and mercy seat (kappōret). This is another and strong link between the two subjects of atonement and redemption or ransom. The ransom money is sometimes clearly "atonement money" as in Ex 30:12.16!

Ps 49:7.8.15 states that no man can ransom another so that this other could live for ever, but God can and will ransom the believer from the power of Sheol. The context makes it clear that this includes eternal life!

Words from the root פָּדָה pādh

which convey the idea of redemption. פָּדָה pādāh, Qal, is "to ransom" and used most often. The Niph'al is also used and has a passive meaning.⁴³ פְּדוּת pəḏût noun f., ransom.⁴⁴ פִּדְיוֹם pīdyôm noun m., ransom.⁴⁵ פִּדְיוֹן pīdyôn noun m., ransom.⁴⁶ The different actions of redemption in the Old Testament expressed with these words can be summarized as follows.

1. To redeem the firstborn (Ex 13:13.15; 34:20; Nm 18:15-16).
2. The Levites are taken as ransom for the firstborn sons of Israel. For the 273 who are more firstborn sons above the number of the Levites five shekels per head are taken as redemption money (Nm 3:12.46-51).
3. To redeem a slave (Lv 19:20).
4. No devoted thing⁴⁷ can be redeemed (Lv 27:29).
5. The firstborn of a cow, a sheep, or a goat can not be redeemed. They are holy and have to be sacrificed (Nm 18:17).
6. The main emphasis is on God's actions of redemption:

43. *ibid.*, p. 804.

44. *ibid.*, p. 804.

45. *ibid.*, p. 804.

46. *ibid.*, p. 804.

47.

- (a) He redeemed Abraham (Is 29:22); David (Ps 31:5; 55:18; "out of every adversity" 2 Sm 4:9; 1 Kgs 1:29); Jeremiah (Jer 15:21 "from the grasp of the ruthless").
- (b) He redeemed Israel from Egypt Dt 7:8 (out of love); 9:26; 13:5; 15:15; 21:8; 24:18; 2 Sm 7:23; 1 Chr 17:21; Neh 1:10; Ps 78:42; 111:9; Mi 6:4.
- (c) He redeems Israel in the future (Jer 31:11; Zec 10:8; from Babylon or other countries of their exile); from all his iniquities (Ps 130:8); from the "hand" (= power) of Sheol (Hos 13:14). The redeemed of the Lord come home (Is 35:10; 51:11.)
- (d) God would redeem them, but they speak lies against him (Hos 7:13).
- (e) Prayers that God may redeem: Israel out of all his troubles (Ps 25:22); David (Ps 26:11); the people who pray (Ps 44:26; Ps 119:134);
- (f) With God is plentiful redemption (Ps 130:7); he redeems the life of his servants (Ps 34:22; Ps 71:23).
- (g) God can redeem from Sheol what man can not (Ps 49:7-8.15).

Words from the root גָּאֵל gāl

which convey the idea of redemption. גָּאֵל gāl, Qal, is "to redeem, act as kinsman" and used most often. The Niph'al is also used and has a passive or reflexive meaning.⁴⁸ גִּאֲלָה gā'ullah noun f., 1. kin, 2. redemption, 3. right of redemption, 4. price of redemption.⁴⁹ גְּאֻלִּים gə'ûlîm noun abstract, redemption.⁵⁰

The different actions of redemption in the Old Testament expressed with these words can be summarized as follows. First a summary about 'human' redemption activity:

48. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 145.

49. *ibid.*, p. 145.

50. *ibid.*, p. 145.

The nearest relative **גֹּאֵל** gō'ēl has the duty to help his brother in redeeming his property (Lv 25:25; Ruth 2:20; 3:9.12.13) and in redeeming him from temporary slavery (Lv 25:48-54). One of the nearest relatives has as "the avenger of blood" even the responsibility to kill the murderer of his relative (Nm 35:12-27; but see the law of Christ in Mt 5,38-48 for the New Covenant).

Houses can be 'redeemed' (Lv 25:29-33) as a piece of land can be (Lv 25:24-26). It is possible to redeem the following things by paying its price plus twenty percent: a vowed unclean animal (Lv 27:13); a firstborn unclean animal (Lv 27:27); a vowed house (Lv 27:15); a vowed field (Lv 27:19.20); some of the tithe (Lv 27:31).

But no devoted thing⁵¹ can be redeemed (Lv 27:28) and in tithing the tenth animal can not be redeemed (Lv 27:33).

As a good ruler the righteous king redeems the poor from life threatening oppression (Ps 72:14).

One important emphasis is on God's actions of redemption:

1. God himself is like the "nearest relative", the **גֹּאֵל** gō'ēl, the redeemer of Israel: Gn 48:15-16; Ps 78:35; Is 41:14; 43:1.14; 44:6.22; 44:23.24; 47:4; 48:17.20; 49:7.26; 52:9; 54:5.8; 59:20; 60:16; 62:12; 63:4.9.16.
2. God redeemed Israel from Egypt: Ex 6:6; 15:13; Ps 74:2; 77:15; 106:10; Is 51:10; 63:9.
3. God redeems Israel from Babylon (Is 52:3; Jer 50:34; Mi 4:10) and in a second exodus (Jer 31:11).
4. God is also the redeemer of individuals: Job 19:25 (Job); Ps 19:14; 103:4 (David); 107:2 (the redeemed from all kind of trouble); Lam 3:58 (redeemed my life from the enemies);
5. God is especially the redeemer of orphans (Prv 23:11).
6. People pray to God to redeem them from enemies (Ps 69:18) and injustice (119:154).

51.

7. God's future redeeming work: Is 35:9 (the redeemed come home to Zion); 63:4 (my year of redemption had come); Hos 13:14 (from death and from Sheol).

11.3.2 Redemption and Ransom in the New Testament

ἡ ἀπολύτρωσις apōlytrōsis **redemption**.

We have seen above that this Greek word was originally used for freeing a prisoner or slave by paying ransom money (lytrōn). When Jesus teaches about the last days and says, "Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Lk 21:28), he seems to think of an action of God which redeems them from all troubles and puts the tribulations of the end times for them to an end forever.

In the following verses Paul and the writer of Hebrews⁵² understand "redemption" as the forgiveness of the sins the believers already have in Christ (Rom 3:23-24; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; Heb 9:15). The closest parallel to this in the Old Testament is the promise that God will redeem Israel from all his iniquities (Ps 130:8).

In the following verses Paul understands the redemption in a similar way as in Lk 21:28 as an eschatological deed of God: In Rom 8:23 it is our receiving the resurrection body, "we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies". In Eph 1:14 the Holy Spirit is "the guarantee of our inheritance" until God redeems what he has acquired for himself to the praise of his glory. Eph 4:30 points to the same event by saying that the believers were sealed by the Holy Spirit of God for the day of redemption, this means the day when God will redeem them for ever from all troubles. This day is the day of the second coming of Christ, the day of resurrection.

When Paul says that Christ is "our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1 Cor 1:30), the word redemption seems to be general, including the forgiveness of sins and the redemption of our bodies. Christ redeems us from all our troubles.

52. If Paul is the author of Hebrews, as was the belief of much of the old church, then of course the two are the same.

According to Heb 11:35 some believers refused to accept the temporary redemption as a prolonging of their life in favor of gaining the better resurrection into eternal life.

τό λύτρον, lytrōn ransom, ransom money.

When the sons of Zebedee and their mother requested the favor to sit at the right and the left hand of Jesus in his kingdom, Jesus took the opportunity to teach all twelve disciples to adopt a servant attitude as career choice (Mt 20:25-28; cf. Mk 10:45):

25 ... You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.⁵³

Jesus sees his own life as the life of a servant. His ultimate service will be to lay down his life as a ransom money payment to redeem many. Again the best place to look into the Old Testament for the interpretive background is Is 52:13-53:12: The last special servant section in Isaiah where this servant dies for the sins of the "many" (52:15; 53:11-12) and makes them thus righteous.

λυτρόω, lytrōō, to redeem.

The two disciples on their way to Emmaus talked to the supposed stranger that they "had hoped" that Jesus "was the one to redeem Israel"⁵⁴ (Lk 24:21). But their hope had died with Jesus.

Paul gives a wonderful presentation of God's grace and redeeming power in Titus 2:11-14:

53. καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν.

54. ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐλπίζομεν ὅτι αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ μέλλων λυτροῦσθαι τὸν Ἰσραήλ.

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

One part of God's grace is that Christ gave himself to die at the cross for us "to redeem us from all lawlessness"⁵⁵. Lawlessness is a word for sin putting the emphasis on the breaking of God's law. In his letter to Titus Paul again and again stresses the necessity of the changed lives of the believers. This is in agreement with Christ's giving himself to redeem us from all lawlessness, all rebellion against God's will. The redeeming power is again his sacrificed life, his shed blood.

The same is true for the next and last section with the word *lytrōō* in 1 Pt 1:13-20 where Peter presents Christ as the passover lamb through whose blood we have been ransomed.

The ransom price is not gold or silver, but "the precious blood of Christ like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1:18-19). That is sacrificial language. Christ was without sin. And the fact that the sacrificial lambs had to be without blemish or spot (Lv 22:20 reflects Christ's perfection typologically).

ἡ λύτρωσις, *lytrōsis* redemption.

When Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, could speak again after obediently writing John's name on a tablet, he praised God "that he has visited his people and prepared a redemption for them"⁵⁶ (Lk 1:68). I understand the "prepared redemption" for God's people to be the Christ Zechariah is pointing to at the end of his praise in Lk 1:77-79 using the Old Testament

55. ὃς ἔδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἵνα λυτρώσῃται ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀνομίας

56. Translation mine. The Greek ἰδοὺ ἐπεσκέψατο καὶ ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ,

picture of the "branch" (Jer 23:5-6; 2 Sm 23:5; Zec 3:8-9; 6:12) and the child on the throne of David (Is 9:1-7).

When Joseph and Mary took the small child Jesus to the temple to present him to the Lord as the firstborn son, "there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher ... And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him⁵⁷ to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk 2:36.38). Again the word "redemption" is related to the child Jesus. They were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem, but the redeemer of Jerusalem would be the Christ, this child when grown up. And this would happen with the severe pain of the mother of this child described in Lk 2:34-35.

The letter to the Hebrews describes the "eternal redemption" accomplished by Christ as follows (9:11-12):

11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

Eternal redemption is that Christ crucified has risen from the dead and reaches the throne of God the father in heaven by means of his own blood and takes his seat of honor and power at the right hand of his father for ever. He is the king of kings and the eternal high priest "after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 7:17; Ps 110:1.4) and he can save for ever (Heb 7:25).

ὁ λυτρωτής, *lytrōtēs* redeemer.

When Stephen says about Moses in his speech, "This Moses, whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' - this man God sent as both ruler and redeemer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush" (Acts 7:35), he, of course, implies more than this. He wants to say that there is a parallel between Moses and Jesus. Israel rejected Moses,

57. Meaning: Jesus, the child.

but God send him as ruler and redeemer. And Israel rejected Jesus, but God send him as an even greater ruler and greater redeemer. That is the whole reason, why Stephen talks so much about Joseph and Moses. Both were leaders chosen by God, but rejected by their brother Israelites. The same is true for Jesus (Acts 7:52-53). God approves of this interpretation of Stephen by showing him the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God in heaven (Acts 7:55-56), the place of greatest power and authority.

Further NT phrases of being bought with a price.

Because we have been bought with a price, we should flee from sexual immorality and lead a holy life which honors the fact that our body "is a temple of the Holy Spirit within" us (1 Cor 6:20). We "were bought with a price", so we should "not become slaves of men" (1 Cor 7:23). In both cases the price we have been bought with is, of course, again the death of Christ, his blood shed for us. As Paul says in Gal 3:13-14:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us⁵⁸ - for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— 14 so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

The blood of Christ shed at the wooden cross is our being bought free from the curse of the law bringing us the blessing of Abraham with the Holy Spirit of God. Paul continues this idea in Gal 4:4-5 by saying that Christ buys us free from being under the law to present us as legally fully empowered heirs:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law⁵⁹, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

58. Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξηγόρασεν ἐκ τῆς κατάρας τοῦ νόμου γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατὰ

59. ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ

As heirs we receive the Spirit of God's Son crying, "Abba! Father!"

Peter predicts that there will be false teachers among the people of God "who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pt 2:1). The master who bought them is Christ, and he bought them with his sacrificed life (see 1 Pt 1:18-19).

Jesus Christ is worshiped in Rv 5 as the one who is worthy to take and open the scroll. The proclaimed reason why he alone is worthy to do this is his being slaughtered and having bought people for God by his blood (Rv 5:9-10). In Rv 14:1-5 John sees Christ standing on "Mount Zion" as "the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads". These 144,000 have some special qualities. For example, they have "been redeemed from the earth" (14:3) and they "have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb" (14:4).⁶⁰ We again can understand that the price by which they have been redeemed was the blood of the Lamb (cf. 5:9-10).

11.4 Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the restoration of peace between two parties.

11.4.1 Words Used

In the active voice the verb καταλλάσσω *katallassō* means "to reconcile somebody (in accusative case) to somebody (in dative case)" (see 2 Cor 5:18-19). In the passive voice it means "to be reconciled" (see Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:20; 1 Cor 7:11).⁶¹ The noun ἡ καταλλαγή *katallagē* means "reconciliation".⁶² The verb ἀποκαταλλάσσω *apokatallassō* also means "to reconcile".⁶³

60. οἱ ἡγορασμένοι ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ... οὗτοι ἡγοράσθησαν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων

61. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 818.

62. *ibid.*, p. 818.

63. *ibid.*, p. 183.

11.4.2 God Reconciles

In the New Testament the above mentioned words are mostly used for the reconciliation of men to God. Only in 1 Cor 7:10-11 we have a reconciliation between two human parties: Talking of Christian couples Paul says that "the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife". He also refers to the fact that this is the command of the Lord Jesus.

In all other texts the reconciliation is between God and man or between God and the whole world. And the one who initiates the reconciliation is God through the sacrificial death of Christ at the cross. In his great discourse about justification by faith (Rom 3:21-5:21) Paul also has a passage about reconciliation (5:9-11):

9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood,
much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.
10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God
by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are recon-
ciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 More than that, we also
rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom
we have now received reconciliation.⁶⁴

God's wrath on judgment day (Rom 2:5) will only target his enemies. The reconciled believers are his friends. They can be proud of their God and rejoice in him. Speaking of his fellow Israelites as far as they are not believers in Christ, Paul says (Rom 11:15):

15 For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the
world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?⁶⁵

64. 10 εἰ γὰρ ἐχθροὶ ὄντες κατηλλάγημεν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, πολλῶ μᾶλλον καταλλαγέντες σωθησόμεθα ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτοῦ• 11 οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι' οὗ νῦν τὴν καταλλαγὴν ἐλάβομεν.

65. εἰ γὰρ ἡ ἀποβολὴ αὐτῶν καταλλαγὴ κόσμου, τίς ἢ πρόσλημις εἰ μὴ ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν;

Because the major part of Israel rejected Christ and was therefore temporarily set aside by God, the Gentiles of the whole world now get the opportunity to hear the gospel and accept it and become friends of God. It seems according to Paul that the future acceptance of all of Israel by God, of the whole remnant of Israel of that time, will coincide with the resurrection of the dead.

That the whole world is already reconciled with God through the death of Christ at the cross is the emphasis of 2 Cor 5:18-21:

18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.⁶⁶ 21 For our sake he made him to be sin⁶⁷ who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

It is clear that it is necessary to accept the friendship of God, to accept his offer of peace. Paul and other servants of God are ambassadors for Christ. To accept their message is to accept Christ's offer of peace and to be reconciled. Those who reject even that outstretched hand of God in the crucified Christ, can have no other hope of peace with God. God in the crucified Christ is the reconciliation of the world. Again a sound Christology including the divinity of Christ is the foundation of the salvation of the world.

In Eph 2:11-18 Paul combines the same subject of reconciliation with the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ. The unity of Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ, his church, is based on the death of Christ at the cross. The Gentiles have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

66. 18 τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ διὰ Χριστοῦ καὶ δόντος ἡμῖν τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς, 19 ὥς ὅτι θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσων ἑαυτῷ, μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, καὶ θέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς. 20 ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὗν πρεσβεύομεν ὥς τοῦ θεοῦ παρακαλοῦντος δι' ἡμῶν• δεόμεθα ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, καταλλάγητε τῷ θεῷ.

67. Or: "to be a sin offering".

Certain regulations of the law of the Old Testament which served to separate Israel from all other nations were made ineffective so that the believers of Israel and the believers of the Gentiles could be united in one new mankind. The peace is between them now and both are reconciled to God. They come into his presence in one Spirit and they form one family of God's household and one holy temple in the Lord (Eph 2:19-22).

While Paul has a strong emphasis on the church as Christ's body in Ephesians he has also a certain cosmological perspective in Colossians in addition to that when he talks of the reconciliation (Col 1:18-22): The reconciliation of all things on earth or in heaven has the effect that there will be peace everywhere and everything will be submitted to God (cf. 1 Cor 15:24-28). The powers who do not want to submit will be dealt with and be done away (cf. Col 2:15). According to Heb 2:14-18 God became man to help and save human beings. This was not intended to help angels (Heb 2:16), probably meaning fallen angels. Quite on the contrary, this was meant to "destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14). The effect of the blood of Christ for people on earth is that their sins are forgiven. The effect of the blood of Christ in heaven is that the accuser of the brothers and sisters is no longer successful in heaven but is thrown out and overcome by the blood of the lamb (Rv 12:10-11). The final result is peace everywhere by the blood of Christ. God wins back his peaceful control of the whole creation.

11.5 God's Righteousness and the Justification of the Sinner

11.5.1 In the Old Testament

Words used.

Here we will look at words of the root צדק *ṣdq* which are used for the concept of righteousness in the Old Testament.⁶⁸

68. For a survey of righteousness in the Old Testament and the different synonyms and antonyms used in the context of the concept of righteousness see Eddy Lanz, *Righ-*

שָׁדָאָה *ṣəḏāqāh* - **righteousness**. is used 157 times in the OT according to Even Shoshan⁶⁹

שֶׁדֶק *ṣēdeq* - **righteousness**. is used 119 times in the OT.⁷⁰

צַדִּיק *ṣaddîq* - **righteous** is used 206 times in the OT.⁷¹

The different verb forms of the root צִדַּק *ṣḏq*. Verb Forms of the Root צִדַּק *ṣḏq* are used 41 times in the OT.⁷² The different verb forms with the root *ṣḏq* are found almost exclusively in cases of conflict or court cases where God or man evaluate the behavior of God or man. The main context is a legal one.

צַדִּיק *ṣāḏaq* be just, be righteous⁷³ (Gn 38:26; Job 4:17; 9:2.15.20; 10:15; 11:2; 13:18; 15:14; 22:3; 25:4; 33:12; 34:5; 35:7; 40:8; Ps 19:10; 51:4; 143:2; Is 43:9.26; 45:25; Ez 16:52).

נִצְטָדַק *niṣṭaddāq* Hithpa'el "how shall we justify ourselves, clear ourselves from suspicion?" (p. 843; emphasis there) Gn 44:16.

נִצְדָּק *niṣḏaq* Niph'al "the holy place shall be put right, in a right condition" (p. 842; Dn 8:14).

צִדְקָה etc. *ṣiddəqāh* Pi'el justify, make to appear righteous (p. 842; Job 32:2; 33:32; Jer 3:11; Ez 16:51.52).

הִצְדִּיק *hiṣḏîq* 1. do justice, in administering the law; 2. declare righteous, justify, 3. justify, vindicate the cause of, save, 4. make righteous, turn to

teousness in the Old and New Testaments (Rawalpindi: Eved Adonai - Is 53:11, 2013), <http://www.lanz.li/engsu/Right-130902-en.pdf>, p. 1-23.

69. Even-Shoshan, A New Concordance of the Bible, p. 977.

70. *ibid.*, p. 977.

71. *ibid.*, p. 975.

72. *ibid.*, p. 976.

73. If not otherwise noted the meanings here are given according to Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament. For this root see p. 842.

righteousness (p. 842-843; Ex 23:7; Dt 25:1; 2 Sm 15:4; 1 Kgs 8:32; 2 Chr 6:23; Job 27:5; Ps 82:3; Prv 17:15; Is 5:23; 50:8; 53:11; Dn 12:3).

God and the concept of righteousness.

The Lord is righteous. The sentence, “The Lord is righteous.” presents righteousness as a quality of God. It can especially mean that God is right or righteous in a certain context. Again the main context is legal.

צַדִּיק יְהוָה צַדִּיק אֱלֹ (saddîq YHWH, saddîq ’ēl (2 Chr 12:6; Ezr 9:15; Neh 9:8.33; Ps 7:10-13; 11:5-7; 119:137; 129:4; 147:17; Is 45:21; Jer 12:1; Lam 1:18; Dn 9:14; Zep 3:5).

When the princes of Israel and the king humble themselves and say, “The Lord is righteous.” (2 Chr 12:6), they mean what is just written before “Thus says the Lord, ‘You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak.’” (2 Chr 12:5). They acknowledge both, that God’s retributive justice is correct and that he has spoken right through his prophet. The same idea that God is just in fulfilling the threats in case of breaking the covenant is also discernible in Dn 9:14. The same context of acknowledging God’s being just and at the same time the sins of the people is also found in Ezra 9:15; Neh 9:33; Lam 1:18 in the context of intercession.

“The Lord is righteous in all his ways” (Ps 145:17), speaks of God’s being righteous in such a way that he can not be unjust. All his dealings, all his doings are in agreement with his view of what is right and just. God is just in fighting the evildoers (Zep 3:5). Is 45:21 presents God’s being just together with his being the savior. God is a righteous judge in saving the upright in heart and punishing the evil (Ps 7:10-13; 11:5-7; 129:4). In Jer 12:1 Jeremiah confesses that God is righteous and therefore he comes to God with his court case against the wicked who want to kill him (cf. Jer 11:18-20). God is just in fulfilling his word (Neh 9:8).

God is also righteous in giving righteous commandments, legal decisions, righteous testimonies and a truthful revelation (Ps 119:137-138)..

The righteous deeds of the Lord. The righteous deeds of the Lord occur four times in the OT. In all these sections the phrases can be understood within a legal context: As a righteous judge God saves the oppressed people

from their oppressors. In these cases Israel is saved from the oppression of other nations. Therefore the righteous deeds of the Lord mean salvation, but still the phrase is a legal one. Similar is true for the phrase in the singular where God's righteousness often implies salvation also of individuals from enemies or troubles (צִדְקַת יְהוָה צִדְקָתוֹ *sidqatô, sidqat YHWH* (Ps 22:31; 71:15.24; 98:2; 111:3; 119:142; 143:1; Is 46:13; 51:6).

צִדְקוֹת יְהוָה *sidqôt YHWH* "righteous acts" of God (p. 842); Jgs 5:11; 1 Sm 12:7; Dn 9:16; Mi 6:5.

In these four places the ESV translates "*the righteous triumphs of the Lord*" (Jgs 5:11), "*concerning all the righteous deeds of the Lord* that he performed for you and for your fathers" (1 Sm 12:7), "O Lord, *according to all your righteous acts*, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem" (Dn 9:16). "O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know *the saving acts of the Lord*" (Mi 6:5). In all these four sections the "righteous deeds of the Lord" speak of God's saving deeds which are positive for Israel. In Mic 6:5 God saved Israel from the plan of Balak king of Moab who had planned to curse Israel through Balaam. The righteous deeds of the Lord in 1 Sm 12 include the liberation from the slavery in Egypt and their coming into the promised land (1 Sm 12:8), and their deliverance out of the hand of their enemies on every side through Gideon, Barak, Jephthah and Samuel (1 Sm 12:9-11). The key idea in these sections is that God is faithful to his covenant and his people and when they cry out to him from their oppressors, he saves them from the enemies. This context is also true for Jgs 5:11 and Dn 9:16 where Daniel continues to pray in intercession to God for his people Israel in 9:17-19.

God's righteous rule. God as King is righteous and his rule is based on righteousness (Ps 48:10; 89:14; 96:13; 97:2.6; 98:9). God's commandments implement righteousness (Gn 30:33: Do not steal!; Dt 24:13; 1 Sm 26:23; Jer 22:3; Ez 45:9; Lv 19:15.36; Dt 25:15; Is 1:21; Jer 22:13; Gn 38:26; 44:16; 20:4; Ez 23:45). The general commandments for judges to declare

the righteous to be righteous and to declare the wicked to be wicked are part of God's system of justice (Ex 23:7; Prv 17:15; Is 5:23).

The "right sacrifices"⁷⁴ are not "sacrifices that give you righteousness", but "sacrifices which are right before God, acceptable to God" (Dt 33:19; Ps 4:5; 51:19). God's justice can be retributive (Is 10:22; 28:17; 59:17; 11:4; Neh 9:33; Lam 1:18; Dn 9:14). He spares righteous people in his judgments (Gn 6:9; 7:1; 18:23.24.25.26.28; 20:4). He judges the nations, the earth and the world with righteousness (Ps 9:8; 96:13; 98:9; Is 26:9; Gn 18:25).

Man and the concept of righteousness.

No man is totally righteous before God. There are passages in the Old Testament that teach the sinfulness of man from his birth (Gn 8:21; Ps 51:5). The question is: Can man be righteous and to what extent?

One important book in which the righteousness of man is made a subject, is the book of Job. In his time Job was an exceptionally pious man, praised by God towards Satan (Job 1:8). When Satan gets the permission from God to attack Job, his family, his wealth and health, it looks as if God has forsaken Job and punished him, because he had fallen into sin. So tremendous were the catastrophes falling on him.

In his calamity Job clings to the idea that he is righteous (Job 27:6). He acknowledges in Job 9:2 that no man can be totally righteous before God (cf. Job 1:5.22), but he is convinced that his present miserable state does not originate from some great sin he had committed. He believes that he is innocent. His three friends always assume that he must have committed some great sin which has let to his calamity.

Elihu kept silent while the three friends of Job tried to correct him. But when they gave it up, Elihu felt himself compelled to enter the argument (Job 32:1-3). Elihu does not accept that Job views himself as righteous and God as in the wrong (Job 33:9-12). Elihu thinks that Job's righteousness or sinfulness concerns himself, that his being righteous does not give God anything (35:7). It is noteworthy that the three friends of Job were rebuked by God (Job 42:7-8, but not this younger man Elihu. Job had to pray for the

74. זִבְחֵי שְׂדֵדִיק zibhê šedeq "right peace-offerings" (p. 841).

three friends so that God would heal them (Job 42:8-9). That was one way God vindicated him towards the three friends. But in his encounter with the majesty of God Job himself repents about what he had said (Job 42:2-6).

Daniel intercedes for his people and says, "For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy." (Dn 9:18). He sees the righteousness of the Jews and Israelites as non-existent and their many sins as self-evident (Dn 9:5-16).

Ecc 7:20 states that there is no absolute righteous man without sin (cf. Is 46:12).

There are people who are called righteous before God. We have seen that there are righteous people who are spared in God's judgments (Gn 6:9; 7:1; 18:23.24.25.26.28; 20:4). This righteousness is not an absolute righteousness, but a relative righteousness within the respective context. Abimelech for example in Gn 20:4 was not righteous in an absolute sense, but innocent with regard to Sarah. Abraham had given her out as his sister, not as his wife. And Abimelech had not yet approached Sarah. And this is acknowledged in God's answer (Gn 20:6).

Gn 6:8-9 (cf. 7:1) give a favorable description of Noah in contrast to the rest of mankind:

But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. 9 ... Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

After the flood though Noah and his descendants are still described in the words of Gn 8:21 which teach the sinfulness and universal corruption of human nature. So what makes people like Noah who are sinful in themselves capable of living as righteous people before God? How can a man "walk with God"?

The key to righteousness is God's grace and human faith. It is a pointer to God's grace when we read in Gn 6:8: "Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord". God revealed his word and plan to Noah and ordered him to build an ark. Noah did it. That is faith (Gn 6:13-22; 7:1; Heb 11:7).

Starting with the sinning of Adam and Eve in Gn 3:1-24 there is clearly an escalation of sin and accompanying curses in Gn 3:1 to 11:9 (Gn 3:14,17; 3:17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25). In answer to Noah's sacrifice after the flood God stops the escalation of punishments through his everlasting covenant of grace between himself "and all flesh that is on the earth" (Gn 8:21 to 9:17). After slowing down the development of all nations by dispersing them all over the earth because of the language confusion at the city of Babel, God starts a new phase of salvation history through the calling of Abram and the promises given to him (Gn 12:1-3.7).

God commands Abram to leave his country, trust God's word and receive a whole country of his own. A fourfold promise invites Abram's faith: 1. The promise of becoming a great nation, 2. of having a great name, 3. of being a blessing for all the families of the earth, 4. of receiving the country of Canaan. Abram answers God's invitation with a life of faith, trusting God. God's revelation to Abram and Abram's faith made Abram to Abraham, a father of many nations (Gn 17:5) which is interpreted by the apostle Paul as a hint that Abraham would not only be the father of the nation of Israel, but of all believers in Israel and in all other nations (Rom 4:11-13).

Abram believed God that he would have an innumerable offspring in spite of the fact that his wife was barren and he had no child: "And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness" (Gn 15:6; cf. Rom 4:3.9). As father of all believers which would be born after him, Abraham's life is a pattern. A framework for salvation history is set which connects God's blessings with honoring Abraham and his seed and his kind of trust in God (Gn 12:2-3; cf. Gn 27:29). This is the background of the saying of Jesus Christ that "salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). The ultimate reason is that he himself, the Savior of the world (Jn 4:42), is from the tribe of Judah (see Gn 49:10) and a son of Abraham. Or as Paul puts it in Gal 3:16-21: The ultimate seed of Abraham in whom all nations receive God's blessing and eternal life, is Jesus the Christ.

David is a good example for the justification of a repenting sinner by faith within the Old Testament. When God forgives David and saves him from blood-guiltiness, his tongue can praise the God of his salvation and the righteousness of God given to him as a gift (Ps 51:14; cf. 32:1-2; Rom 4:6-8).

The section in Heb 10:37-11:40 shows us the way of faith as the way of righteousness and salvation throughout the Old Testament. At the beginning of this (Heb 10:37-38) the writer points to Hb 2:4 summarizing the principle.

... but my righteous one shall live by faith.

This is also the verse with which the apostle Paul sums up his gospel in Rom 1:16-17 (cf. Gal 3:11). I would not be surprised if we would learn in the coming world that he was also the writer of the letter to the Hebrews.

When God promised that the nations of the world would be blessed in the seed of Abraham (Gn 22:18; cf. 12:3; 26:4; 28:14), he implied that this was a promise of a future blessing. In the further development of Genesis this becomes eschatological (Gn 49:1). There were partial fulfillments from the time of the life of the patriarchs until Moses and Joshua and later, but the ultimate fulfillment was reserved to the coming of Christ.

God's justification of sinners through the coming Christ. The personal servant of the Lord in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is presented as the one who makes those sinners righteous who accept his teaching and recognize him (53:11):

11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.⁷⁵

In many sections of the the New Testament this personal servant of the Lord in Isaiah is identified as Jesus Christ (e.g. Lk 22:37; Acts 8:32-35). Now two things are mentioned here through which the coming Christ makes many righteous: First "he shall bear their iniquities" and second he will make them righteous "by his knowledge". The Hebrew for this last phrase can be understood in the sense of "by knowing him" or "by his own knowledge, by his teaching". There are elements of his teaching activity in the four famous servant sections. The coastlands wait for his law or his teaching (42:4). He is teaching those coastlands about himself in 49:1-6 and he

75. מַעֲמֵל נַפְשׁוֹ יֵרָאֶה יֹשֶׁבֶעַ בְּדַעְתּוֹ וַיִּצְדִּיק צַדִּיק עַבְדִּי לְרַבִּים וַיְעֹנֶהֶם הוּא יִסְבֵּל:

is a teacher of God's word in 50:4-5.10.⁷⁶ I think, we have to combine both elements "knowing Christ" and "Christ's knowledge". Those who know Christ have eternal life (Jn 17:3) and they also obey his words and have thus eternal life (Is 50:10; Jn 5:24).

The foundation of Christ's justifying the sinners in Isaiah 53:11 is his suffering with the shedding of his blood for Israel (53:8) and all nations (the many in Is 52:15 and 53:11-12). This is stated in 53:11 with the words "he shall bear their iniquities". That is the same combination of justification of the sinners with their faith in Christ and the atonement through Christ's blood we have in Rom 3:21-26. This is just another instance where Isaiah 53 is a core section for the soteriology of the Old Testament preparing the way for the gospel of the New Testament.

One part of the naming of the coming Christ in Is 9:6 (cf. 10:21) is "Mighty God". And in Is 53 the revelation of the identity of the suffering servant is the revelation of "the arm of the Lord" (53:1; cf. 51:9; 52:10). God puts the sin of the world onto this one lamb of God (53:6-7). Salvation here is a divine work, a cooperation between God and his servant. Therefore it is not surprising that another text in Isaiah presents worldwide salvation as to be found in the recognition and confession that righteousness is only to be found in the one and only true God (Is 45:22-25):

22 Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!

For I am God, and there is no other.

23 By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return:

‘To me every knee shall bow,
every tongue shall swear allegiance.’

24 Only in the Lord, it shall be said of me,
are righteousness and strength;
to him shall come and be ashamed
all who were incensed against him.

25 In the Lord all the offspring of Israel

76. Cf. Dn 12:3 which seems to imply that people are made righteous by being taught the truth.

shall be justified and shall glory.⁷⁷

He the one and only true God calls the nations of the world to turn to God and find salvation. God's decree is that every human being has to acknowledge him as the true God and the source of righteousness and strength. If we combine this with the arm of the Lord in Isaiah 53 we have another hint to the divinity of Christ. Therefore the apostle Paul had no scruples to write Philippians 2:9-11 on the background of Isaiah 45:22-25: Every man and every angel will bow down to the divinity of Jesus Christ and confess that Jesus is the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the source of righteousness and strength by becoming weak and condemned to a criminal's death at the cross (Phil 2:5-8) and by being raised on the third day from death to receive the highest name there is, the name of Lord God.

In one of the passages about the coming Christ in Jeremiah (23:5-6) his name is "The Lord is our righteousness":⁷⁸

5 Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'

After the exile the prophet Zechariah takes up this prophecy about the Christ as the righteous Branch and combines it with forgiveness of sins:

8 Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch. 9 For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day.

77. The outcome of this justification of all of the offspring of Israel in the Lord will be: "Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified" (Is 60:21).

78. In the parallel of Jer 33:15-16 this is also the name of the New Jerusalem of the times of the coming Christ.

The coming Christ as the Branch will bring righteousness on a day of salvation when God "will remove the iniquity of this land" (cf. Jer 31:31-34). Within Zechariah Israel will realize this salvation on the day when they recognize the Lord whom they have pierced as their coming Savior (Zec 12:9-13:1).

11.5.2 In the New Testament

The family of words related to righteousness.

There are quite a few words in the New Testament which are related to the semantic domain of righteousness.⁷⁹ People who do not repent are "storing up wrath for" themselves "on the day of wrath when God's *righteous judgment* will be revealed" (Rom 2:5).⁸⁰ A just divine judgment can be called ἡ δίκη dikē (Acts 28:4; 2 Thes 1:9; Jude 1:7). The adverb "right, justly, truly" is δικαίως dikaiōs.⁸¹ The judge enforcing justice is δικαστής dikastēs and Moses was at first not accepted as such by his fellow Israelites (Acts 7:27.35).

In the New Testament τὸ δικαίωμα dikaiōma is used for God's statutes or commandments (Lk 1:6; Rom 2:26) or the "righteous requirement" of God's law (Rom 8:4), for the regulations of the Old Testament worship (Heb 9:1.10), for God's righteous decision in judgment of sins (Rom 1:32; Rv 15:4), for the righteous deeds of the saints (Rv 19:8) and for our subject of the greatest importance: The righteousness of Christ (Rom 5:18) bringing about our justification (Rom 5:16). In the two places where δικαίωσις dikaiōsis is used, it is the justification of those who believe in Jesus Christ, based on his sacrificial death and the life giving power of his resurrection (Rom 4:25; 5:18).

There are three more words in this family related to righteousness at which we want to look in more detail because they can help us to a better

79. The list given here is not complete. For this other composite words would have to be included like ἀδικέω, ἀδικημα, ἀδικία, ἄδικος, ἀδίκως, ἀντίδικος, ἐκδικέω, ἐκδίκησις, ἔκδικος.

80. ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ θεοῦ

81. See Lk 23:41; 1 Cor 15:34; 1 Thes 2:10; Tit 2:12; 1 Pt 2:23.

understanding of God's righteousness and of the justification of the sinner.

The use of δικαιοσύνη "righteousness" in this context.

The most important word for righteousness in the NT is *dikaiōsynē* δικαιοσύνη. And the most important apostle to explain it, is Paul.

God and righteousness. The gospel is so important for Paul for "in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith" (Rom 1:17). If we asked him what the righteousness of God is, he would say, that God himself is just and that he is the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom 3:26). Both aspects of God's righteousness are of enormous importance. God himself is just. This is his own righteousness (cf. Rom 3:5).

But at the same time God's righteousness is also a gracious present which God gives to those who believe in Jesus Christ, especially in his atoning death (Rom 3:21.22.25). Being himself just, God was looking forward to Golgotha in former times when he did not immediately punish the sins of mankind (Rom 3:25). So the death of Christ, the shedding of his blood, became the atoning center of human salvation history. The Old Testament was looking forward to it and the New Testament is based on it (Mt 26:28).

The apostle John sees a strong relationship between God's own righteousness and the practiced righteousness of the believers. God is righteous and the practiced righteousness of the believers shows them to be born again of God, to be children of God (1 Jn 2:29; 3:7.10).

Christ and righteousness. Christ fulfills all righteousness (Mt 3:15) and loves it (Heb 1:9). He is going to judge the whole world in righteousness (Acts 17:31; Rv 19:11). He died as a sin offering for our sins "so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (1 Pt 2:24). Peter addresses the Gentile Christians he is writing to as those "who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pt 1:1). Jesus says that after his going to the Father the Holy Spirit will come and "8 ...

will convict the world concerning ... righteousness... 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer..." (Jn 16:8.10). This means that the way Christ went to the Father, by dying at the cross, rising on the third day and ascending to heaven, is the key to understand "righteousness" and that this is one of the main lessons the Holy Spirit teaches people who are not born again yet ("the world").

Believers and righteousness. John the Baptist came "in the way of righteousness" (Mt 21:32). Abraham's trust in God "was counted to him as righteousness" (Rom 4:3; cf. Gn 15:6), and that happened already when he was still uncircumcised (Rom 4:9-10). Paul explains the significance of his circumcision happening later (Rom 4:11-13):

11 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, 12 and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. 13 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.

This faith of Abraham as the way to gain righteousness is also the way for Christian believers from all nations to gain it (Rom 4:22-25; cf. Acts 10:35). "And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness" (Rom 4:5). To acknowledge one's own inability to be righteous and accept God's gift of righteousness in Christ, is to submit to God's righteousness. The problem of Israel was that they tried to establish their own righteousness and thus did not submit to God's righteousness (Rom 9:31; 10:3).

The meaning of the name Melchizedek, the type of Christ, is "king of righteousness" (Heb 7:2), that is "righteous king". True disciples "hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Mt 5:6). Their being persecuted for righteousness' sake is a sign of their belonging to the kingdom of heaven (5:10). The

righteousness needed to enter the kingdom of heaven has to be better than that of the scribes and Pharisees (Mt 5:20). Disciples should do deeds of righteousness (giving to the needy, praying, fasting) for God, not for the eyes of the people (Mt 6:1). Disciples must have God's kingdom and his righteousness as their top priority (Mt 6:33). God's plan of salvation is to deliver his people from the hand of their enemies, that they might serve him without fear "in holiness and righteousness before him" all their days (Lk 1:74-75).

Unbelievers and righteousness. The problem of hypocrites is that their righteousness is not good enough to enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:20; cf. 23:13-15). The servants of Satan love to "disguise themselves as servants of righteousness" (2 Cor 11:15). The Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus is addressed by Paul in this way: "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10).

How man is made or declared righteous before God. Christ Jesus is in his person our righteousness from God (1 Cor 1:30). God uses his preached word to bring his righteousness to people (2 Cor 3:9; Heb 5:13; 2 Pt 2:5).

People who gain righteousness from God receive it by faith in him (Rom 4:13; 9:30; 10:6,10; Gal 3:6; 5:5; Phil 3:9; Heb 11:7).

Works of the law or the law are not the way to gain righteousness before God (Rom 4:6; Tit 3:5; Rom 10:4,5; Gal 2:21; Gal 3:21; Phil 3:6,9). James 2:18-26 does not teach that righteousness is gained by the works of the law, but by works of faith. James does not really contradict Paul, but a misunderstood and misused Paul. The works of Abraham and of Rahab which James mentions are not the works to fulfill the law, but works which show their faith in God in action. Paul teaches the same active faith in Gal 5:6 and other places: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love."

The Justification of the sinner happens when he receives the gift of righteousness freely from God through Christ. As Adam is the father of the old mankind and gave death to all, so Jesus Christ is the founder of a

new mankind and gives his righteousness as a gift to all his people (Rom 5:17; 8:10; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 6:14). In faith we have already received this righteousness, but there is also a future aspect to it: "For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness" (Gal 5:5; cf. also 2 Tm 4:8). As so often in the New Testament there is the aspect of what we already have in Christ, and the other aspect of the future realization of the same thing in the coming new world (cf. 2 Pt 3:13).

The justification of the sinner is rooted in God's grace given to him freely (Rom 3:24; 5:21; Gal 2:21) according to God's mercy on him (Tit 3:5).

Justified Sinners are challenged to practice righteousness. It is Paul's custom to admonish justified believers to commit themselves to live a righteous life (Rom 6:13.16; 6:18.19.20; 14:17; 2 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 9:9.10; Eph 4:24; 5:9; Phil 1:11; 1 Tm 6:11; 2 Tm 2:22; 2 Tm 3:16; Heb 11:33; 12:11). He also recommends his own example in living a righteous life (2 Cor 6:7). Paul would also teach the standard of righteousness to people outside the church (Acts 24:25).

The letter of James is like the Sermon on the Mount in the shape of an epistle. It is not surprising that he emphasizes the necessity of righteousness in the life of a disciple (Jas 1:20; 3:18). Peter presents the death of Christ for us as a reason to live a righteous life (1 Pt 2:24). Even if we have to suffer for righteousness' sake, we are blessed (1 Pt 3:14). Knowing Jesus Christ is to know the way of righteousness (2 Pt 2:20-21). John urges the believers not to be deceived, but to stick to the unity of faith and life: "Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous" (1 Jn 3:7). On the last page of the Bible we find these strange orders or permissions (Rv 22:11-12):

11 Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy,
and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy. 12
Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me,
to repay everyone for what he has done.

The idea behind these permissions to do as one wishes to do, to do evil or to do good, is the truth of 22:12 that all deeds will be repaid when Christ will

come back. Then all practiced righteousness gets its right reward. Then all wickedness will be punished (Rv 22:15; 21:8). Blessed and wise are those who act accordingly and wash the robe of their life in the blood of Christ (Rv 22:14; 7:14).

The use of δίκαιος "righteous" in this context.

The adjective righteous is δίκαιος dikaiōs .

God's being just or righteous. God is just (John 17:25; Rom 3:26). He is also the origin of righteousness in the believers because they are born of him: "If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him (1 Jn 2:29). Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous (1 Jn 3:7). God is just in his judgment (2 Thes 1:5-6; 2 Tm 4:8; Rv 16:5.7; 19:2). God's ways are just (Rv 15:3).

Christ's being just or righteous. Jesus Christ is "righteous" (Mt 27:4.19; Luke 23:47) or "the righteous" (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14). His judgment is just (Jn 5:30). He died for sinners to justify them through his blood Rom 5:8-9, he suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous (1 Pt 3:18). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 1:9). "But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 Jn 2:1). Paul compares Adam and Christ and states in this context how great the effect of Christ's obedience is for his people (Rom 5:19):

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.⁸²

Christ's obedience and righteousness is imputed to us and we are presented as righteous before God.

82. οὕτως καὶ διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἐνὸς δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί.

Believers and being righteous. Joseph was called righteous (Mt 1:19), so was John the Baptist (Mk 6:20) and his parents (Lk 1:6) and many others (Lk 1:17); 2:25; 23:50; Acts 10:22; Rom 5:7); Heb 11:4; 1 Jn 3:12; 2 Pt 2:7-8). The spirits of the righteous made perfect gather in the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:23).

Jesus has not come to call righteous, but sinners to repentance (Mt 9:13; Mk 2:17; Lk 5:32). "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Lk 15:7). "The law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient" (1 Tm 1:9). Overseers should be righteous (Tit 1:8). The rich who have murdered the righteous will be punished for it (Jas 5:6). The prayer of a righteous person has great power (Jas 5:16) and the Lord's eyes and ears are attentive towards them (1 Pt 3:12). The righteous is saved only with difficulties (1 Pt 4:18). The righteous who will continue to do right will be rewarded by the coming Christ (Rv 22:11-12).

Self righteous and hypocrites. Lk 18:9-14 targets especially self righteous people (Lk 18:9). Hypocrites tried to present themselves as righteous trying to trap Jesus (Lk 20:20).

Judgment and being righteous. Judgment should be just and righteous (Jn 7:24). When it comes to the day of judgment, the difference between righteous and wicked will become eternal. The righteous shine like the sun (Mt 13:43) and the wicked are removed from the midst of the righteous (13:49). The righteous will be surprised that they have served Jesus and will go into eternal life (Mt 25:37,46). The shedding of the blood of all righteous will be punished (Mt 23:35). Good deeds will be repaid at the resurrection of the just (Lk 14:14). There will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15).

Ethics and what is right. The adjective "righteous" is also used in an ethical context to speak of what is right and fitting (Phil 4:8; Col 4:1; 2 Pt 1:13). God's commandments are just (Rom 7:12; Eph 6:1). It is not right to obey man more than God (Acts 4:19).

Justification and being right. The most important use of the adjective "righteous" for our subject is found in Rom 1:17, Gal 3:10-11 and Heb 10:38. It is the quotation from Hb 2:4 with which Paul summarizes his gospel (Rom 1:17): "The righteous shall live by faith."⁸³ What Paul means by this, seems to be: "The one, who is righteous by faith, he shall live!"

Except Jesus, it seems impossible that someone may be righteous by the law or by works of the law. Not the hearers of the law are righteous, but the doers of the law will be justified (Rom 2:13). "None is righteous, no, not one" (3:10). "No one is justified before God by the law" (Gal 3:11).

The use of δικαιόω "to declare righteous" in this context.

The verb δικαιόω dikaiōō means to declare someone right or righteous who is really right or righteous or to make someone righteous who was a sinner before.

God and "to declare righteous". God will be justified in his words (Rom 3:4). God's righteousness has two aspects, that he himself is just and that he is "the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (3:26). God will "justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith (3:30). God has already justified and glorified his foreknown, predestined and called (8:29-30). "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies" (8:33).

Christ and "to declare righteous". We are justified through Jesus Christ (Gal 2:17). Christ himself was "manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit" or "proven righteous by the Spirit" (1 Tm 3:16).

Believers and "to declare righteous". "For one who has died has been set free from sin"⁸⁴ (Rom 6:7). If Paul is not aware of any wrongdoing, he still is not acquitted by this fact (1 Cor 4:4). Paul presents a list of different kinds of sinners to the church in Corinth and then goes on saying: "And

83. Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται.

84. ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας.

such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11). This shows that the unity of the believers with Christ and their share in the Spirit of God has really changed them before God. They are now holy and righteous. The pouring out of the Spirit of God is also important for this change in Tit 3:6-7:

... 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ
our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might
become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Paul teaches that the Scripture was "foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith" (Gal 3:8). Because believers have now already been justified by the blood of Christ, that is by his death, they can be very confident that they will be saved from the wrath of God by his life (Rom 5:9-10).

Justification and "to declare righteous". Justification of the sinner happens through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 13:38-39; Rom 3:24-26; 3:28.30; 4:5-6; 5:1; Gal 2:16-17). It does not happen by works of the law (Rom 2:13; 3:20.28; 4:2; Gal 2:16; 3:11; 5:4). One purpose of the law is that it produces knowledge of sin (Rom 3:20) another is that "the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith" (Gal 3:24). We have seen already that James teaches that a faith without deeds of faith in one's life is dead and ineffective (James 2:21.24.25). He does not teach that we have to do the works of the law to get justified.

The root cause of the justification of a sinner is the grace of God given to him (Rom 3:24; Gal 5:4). Justification or condemnation of the people judged on judgment day will be done by their own words: "... for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Mt 12:37). Justification is an act of being exalted by God after someone has humbled himself before God (Lk 18:14).

11.6 Adoption as Sons and Heirs

11.6.1 Word used

The word that is used for the adoption of somebody as one's own child is ἡ υἱοθεσία *hyiothësia*.⁸⁵ This was a technical legal term for adoption. Looking at the five occurrences in the New Testament, I think, it could also be translated there as "status of a son", "status of a child".

11.6.2 God chooses to adopt someone as his child.

Within the Bible we find this word "*hyiothësia*" only in the New Testament and there in Paul's letters. The parent accepting somebody as his child is God. According to Rom 9:4 the status of children of God belongs to the Israelites (cf. Ex 4:22-23).

In the other four instances Paul speaks about Christian believers out of Israel or the Gentiles. On the list of "all spiritual blessings" which the Father has bestowed upon us in Christ in the heavenly places Paul speaks of the fact that in his love God "predestined us for the status of children through Jesus Christ"⁸⁶ right after mentioning that "he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph 1:3-5).

In Gal 4:1-7 Paul speaks of the status of the heir in his childhood to be comparable to the status of a slave. The time when he comes of age is the time when he can start to enjoy his status of a son with full legal rights to act as the owner of all his inheritance:

4:1 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, 2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. 3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his

85. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 1649.

86. Translation mine.

Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Paul here seems to understand the phrase translated by the ESV with "so that we might receive adoption as sons" in the sense of the formerly non-grown up children reaching full legal adulthood: "so that we might receive the status of sons" with real legal ownership. Or Paul might mix the figures of speech, talking both of real children and of slaves being adopted. I personally prefer the first. Paul speaks of real children of God, being put under the law or under the elementary principles of the world and resembling slaves because they are not free to act according to their own will being under guardianship. The time set by the father is the time of the coming of Christ. His death at the cross redeemed us from being under the law (cf. Gal 3:13-14). The coming of the Spirit of God's son into our hearts sealed the fact that we are children and heirs.

The receiving of the Spirit of Christ and God (Rom 8:9) is in Rom 8:15 equal to the receiving of the Spirit of sonship in contrast to the spirit of slave-hood. The results of receiving the Spirit are the same in Gal 4:6 and in Rom 8:15: The children cry out, "Abba! Father!" and they are heirs of vast fortunes (Rom 8:17; Gal 4:7; 3:29).

Therefore believers are already children and heirs of God in a spiritual way and acting as such, having received the firstfruits of the Spirit. But when it comes to the question of their body, they have not yet received the redemption of their bodies (Rom 8:23):

And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.⁸⁷

87. οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν, νίθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν.

The future redemption of our bodies will happen, when we shall receive the glorified, Christlike body of our resurrection or transformation (Rom 8:29-30; 1 Cor 15:42-53; 1 Thes 4:16-17; Phil 3:20-21). The resurrection or transformation of the believers at the second coming of Christ is also the public revelation of their sonship as we read in Rom 8:19 (cf. also Col 3:1-4):

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing
of the sons of God.⁸⁸

11.7 Regeneration

11.7.1 In the Old Testament

The word regeneration or being born again does not appear as such in the Old Testament, but the subject is visible. In his great psalm of repentance David puts it in these words (Ps 51:10-12):

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.⁸⁹
11 Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Especially verse 10 speaks of the new creation of a clean heart the renewal of a right spirit. Isaiah portrays the personal servant of the Lord after his atoning death and his resurrection as having numerous spiritual children (Is 53:10-11): It is clear that the children are spiritual because the servant had died and had been buried. Coming alive again he has a threefold success of first seeing his offspring, second living very long (eternally) and third fulfilling the will of the Lord worldwide (cf. Is 42:1-7; 49:6-7). The spiritual

88. ἡ γὰρ ἀποκαταδοκία τῆς κτίσεως τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται•

89.

לֵב טָהוֹר בְּרָא־לִי אֱלֹהִים וְרוּחַ נָכוֹן חֲדַשׁ בְּקִרְבִּי:

children of the servant are being born again of the Holy Spirit (cf. Is 43:19; 44:3-5; 48:21; 55:1 with John 7:37-39).

Jeremiah speaks of the same renewal under the wording of "the new covenant" where God writes his will not on tablets on stone, but on the hearts changing them (Jer 31:31-34; cf. 24:7). According to Jer 33:22 there will be an innumerable number of the seed of David and of the Levite priests. Paul says that every person receiving Christ in his heart is seen by God neither as Jew nor Greek but as one in Christ Jesus. And if they are Christ's, then they are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise (Gal 3:27-29). In the same way Paul sees God the Holy Spirit writing on the tablets of the heart of those Christians, fulfilling Jer 31:31-34 (2 Cor 3:3-6.14-18).

Ezekiel has a very similar passage about God changing the heart of the Israelites after the judgment of the exile (36:25-27):

25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

This passage is the closest parallel to the words of Jesus to Nicodemus in John 3:3.5 where Jesus clearly thinks that Nicodemus as "the teacher of Israel" should have known about the new birth from the Old Testament. We find the Spirit, we find the "water" and we find the deep impact of God's changing the heart from the inside. What a wonderful picture, the heart of stone is taken away and a truly human heart of flesh is implanted again. The result is that the people have the Spirit of God in them and obey his guidance and follow his rules (cf. John 3:8). They are the people of God (Ez 36:28) and consequently belong to the kingdom of God (John 3:3.5).

11.7.2 In the New Testament

Words Used

γεννάω *gĕnnaō*, verb, means in the active voice "to generate, beget, give birth to" (Mt 1:2; Gal 4:24) and in the passive voice "to be born" (Jn 1:13).⁹⁰ This is the verb which is used most often in the New Testament for the idea of being born again.

ἀναγεννάω *anagĕnnaō*, verb, means in the active voice "to beget again, to cause somebody to be born again" (1 Pt 1:3) and in the passive voice "to be born again" (in 1 Pt 1:23; used only these two times in the NT).⁹¹

ἀποκνέω *apōknyēō*, verb, means "to beget, to give birth to" (Jas 1:15.18; used only twice in the NT).⁹²

ἡ παλιγγενεσία *palingĕnĕsia*, noun f., means "the being born again, the regeneration" 1. of the world (Mt 19:28), 2. of individual redeemed man (Titus 3:5; used only these two times in the NT).⁹³

ἡ ἀνακαίνωσις *anakainōsis*, noun f., means "renewal" (Tit 3:5; Rom 12:2; used only twice in the NT).⁹⁴

Jesus Christ born of God the Father

Paul seems to interpret his quotation of Ps 2:7 in Acts 13:33-34 in the light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead:

32 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, 33 this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'

Such an understanding would agree with Rom 1:3-4 where Paul says that the gospel of God is "concerning his Son, who was descended from David

90. Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, p. 307-9.

91. *ibid.*, p. 102.

92. *ibid.*, p. 186.

93. *ibid.*, p. 1201-2.

94. *ibid.*, p. 110.

according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord". Ps 2:7 is also quoted in Heb 1:5 and Heb 5:5 and interpreted as a prophecy about Jesus the Son of God. It is noteworthy that Heb 5:5-6 combine Ps 2:7 and 110:4 as related to Jesus being appointed as high priest.

In Ps 110:1-4 the person who is the Lord of David and is invited to sit at the right hand of God, is both king and priest. The New Testament fulfillment of the sitting of Jesus at the right hand of God is related to his ascension after his death and resurrection (Acts 2:32-36). This again would fit our impression that Ps 2:7 is viewed in the New Testament as the proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God and the Ruler of all nations through the power of his resurrection (cf. Acts 4:24-28).

Luke has written both his gospel and Acts. In the gospel the sonship of Jesus is related to his miraculous conception of the Holy Spirit in his mothers womb and his consequent birth from her as a virgin (Lk 1:35). If Paul in Acts 13:33-34 understands Ps 2:7 as fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ, then the resurrection of Christ is like his being born again of the Father.

In quite this sense Peter speaks of our being born again as something which is accomplished by the Father through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pt 1:3). Paul has the same conviction that the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the last Adam, has made him a life giving spirit (1 Cor 15:45; cf. Jn 20:22).

Because the risen Christ is a life-giving spirit, Paul often thinks of the transformed believers as people who have been made alive with Christ and raised spiritually from the dead (Rom 6:4; Eph 2:4-6; Col 3:1-4). He also admonishes them to put on the new mankind which is Christ like someone puts on new clothes (Eph 4:20-24; Col 3:8-11; Rom 13:11-14; cf. Gal 3:27-28).

The regeneration of individuals

Being born of God. The apostle John loves the phrase that people are "born of God". Whoever receives Jesus Christ and believes in his name, is

given the right to become a child of God who is born of God (Jn 1:13; cf. Jn 8:41). God is righteous. If anybody now practices righteousness, he only can do so because he has been born of God (1 Jn 2:29). Such a person does not make "a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God" (1 Jn 3:9). Someone who truly "loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 Jn 4:7). "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him" (1 Jn 5:1). He "overcomes the world" (1 Jn 5:4). He "does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him" (1 Jn 5:18).

According to James 1:18 God of his own will "brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." Peter praises "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" who "according to his great mercy ... has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pt 1:3).

Being born "from above" or "again". Speaking to Nicodemus Jesus says in Jn 3:3:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.⁹⁵

The Greek word for "again" could also be translated as "above". In 3:4 Nicodemus seems to understand Jesus as having meant "again". Other Bible texts clearly speak of being born "again". Therefore this is preferable. But John also sometimes seems to love ambiguity, that means that one phrase can be understood in two ways in the same context ⁹⁶

If we remember that Paul calls the heavenly Jerusalem "our mother" (Gal 4:26) and that "the river of the water of life" is "flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb" in that city (Rv 22:1) and is offered now

95. Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ἐὰν μὴ τις γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν, οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ.

96. See e.g. the statement in John 13:30: "And it was night." Compare Jn 9:4-5; 11:9-10 and 12:35-36).

to the thirsty (Rv 22:17; cf. 7:17; 21:6) and that this water of life in John's gospel is the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:37-39; 4:10-14), then "from above" is also a correct understanding for this spiritual birth (cf. Ps 87:4-6). Jn 3:7 uses the same ambiguous word.

Titus 3:5 speaks of being born again and being renewed (cf. Rom 12:2) through the Holy Spirit.

Being born of the Spirit. In Jn 3:5 Jesus teaches Nicodemus that people have to be "born of water and the Spirit" to enter the kingdom of God. In Jn 3:6 and 3:8 he just repeats the "being born of the Spirit" which seems to be the more important phrase. In the immediate context the pair "water and Spirit" was used already in John 1:26 for John's baptizing with water and in John 1:33 for Jesus "who baptizes with the Holy Spirit". Immediately after our text we again see John baptizing with water (Jn 3:23) and giving his testimony for Jesus Christ as vastly superior having received the Spirit without measure (Jn 3:34). Jesus used his disciples to baptize people with water and his movement of repentance and baptism got even greater than the movement around John the Baptist (Jn 3:22; 4:1-3). The phrase "being born of water and the Spirit" could point to the necessity that the Jews of that time had to repent and get baptized with water to show that they prepare themselves for the coming kingdom of God with the coming of the Christ who then would baptize them with the Holy Spirit. This would mean for Nicodemus that he should also publicly repent, humble himself and get baptized with water so that he would be prepared for the baptism with the Spirit when the time would be there (Jn 7:39).

Another possibility to understand the being "born of water and the Spirit" is to combine this text in John 3 with Ez 36:25-27 and to understand the "water" as meaning the Spirit (as in Jn 4:10-14 and 7:37-39): "being born of water, that is of the Spirit".

Being born according to the Spirit. In Gal 4:28-29 Paul's use of "being born according to the Spirit" (like Isaac) stands in contrast to "being born according to the flesh" (like Ishmael).

Being born through the gospel, God's word, his promise. In the aforementioned example of Isaac Paul says that he was born by God's promise of the free woman while "the son of the slave was born according to the flesh", meaning the normal way of producing children without a special promise of God and without a miracle (Gal 4:23). He understands the two pairs of mothers (Sarah and Isaac, Hagar and Ishmael) with their children allegorically:

... these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

The difference between the two mothers and covenants (see 2 Cor 3:1-17; Jer 31:31-34) is also the reason why the law-oriented religion of Pharisaic Judaism was persecuting the grace-oriented movement of the disciples of Jesus Christ (Gal 4:29).

The word of God is key for being born again, because if it is accepted by faith, a change of heart follows. Therefore Paul can speak of himself as the spiritual father of the believers in Corinth, "for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (1 Cor 4:15; cf. Phlm 1:10 where Paul is "father" of Onesimus). According to Peter true Christians "have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Pt 1:23).

The regeneration of the world.

The word "new birth" or "being born again", "regeneration" is used in a different sense in Mt 19:28:

Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world⁹⁷, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

97. ἐν τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ

The phrase here translated with "in the new world" is literally in the Greek "in the new birth" or "in the being born again". It is clear that it is not an individual new birth or being born again, but it is something of world-wide dimensions. Therefore it was translated by the ESV with "in the new world". There are parallels to this. Compare Mt 24:8:

All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.⁹⁸

The catastrophes mentioned before (wars, famines, earthquakes) are great pains for the nations and the world, but at the same time this word implies the coming birth of a new world ushered in by the birth pains. Paul seems to take this parable up in Rom 8:18-22:

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.⁹⁹

Here Paul speaks of "the sufferings of this present time" for the Christians and the world. The turning point for both is the "coming era", the time starting with "the revealing of the sons of God" which coincide with their "adoption as sons" and the "redemption" of their "bodies" (Rom 8:23) at the coming of Christ (Col 3:4).

98. πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἀρχὴ ὠδίνων.

99. οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει ἕχρι τοῦ νῦν•

11.8 Eternal Life

11.8.1 In the Old Testament

God and life, including eternal life.

God as the giver or source of life. "The fountain of life" is with God (Ps 36:9)¹⁰⁰ God is "the fountain of living waters" (Jer 2:13; 17:13).¹⁰¹ As the giver of my life he is "the God of my life" (Ps 42:8). "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life" (Prv 14:27).¹⁰² God's blessings include the gift of eternal life (Ps 133:3).¹⁰³

God is king forever and living forever. King Darius issued a decree (Dn 6:26):

I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion
people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel,
for he is the living God, enduring forever;
his kingdom shall never be destroyed,
and his dominion shall be to the end.

This implies God's existence forever as does Dn 4:3 and Is 9:6-7. Accordingly one of the most popular confessions in the Old Testament is the phrase that the Lord lives (2 Sm 22:47; Ps 18:46)¹⁰⁴ or that God is a living God (Jer 10:10; 23:36)¹⁰⁵ which is also understood in contrast to the dead idols. Hezekiah asks God to "hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God" and he prays for the rescue of Jerusalem from the Assyrians so that all the world may understand the difference between the living God and the idols (2 Kgs 19:4.16.19; Is 37:4.17.20). The living God is a source of joy for believers (Ps 84:3).

100. כִּי־עֲמֻדָּה מִקְדֹּר חַיִּים בְּאֹרֶךְ נִרְאָה־אֵדָר:
101. מִקְדֹּר מֵיִם חַיִּים
102. יִרְאֵת יְהוָה מִקְדֹּר חַיִּים לְסֹדֶר מִמְּקַשֵּׁי מָוֶת:
103. כִּטְל־חַרְמוֹן שִׁירָד־עַל־הַרְבֵּי צִיּוֹן כִּי שָׁם צִנְהָ יְהוָה אֶת־הַפְּרִכָּה חַיִּים עַד־הָעוֹלָם:
104. חַי־יְהוָה
105. הוּא־אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים

God's covenant name presents him as the one who is (forever). The very name of God revealed to Moses in Ex 3:14-15 speaks of his eternal existence according to the further understanding and explanation of this name in the Bible:

13 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I am who I am."¹⁰⁶ And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I am has sent me to you.'" 15 God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.'¹⁰⁷ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."

The phrase which is here translated with "I am who I am" has the imperfect verb form in Hebrew. The time reference of this verb form has to be understood from the context. Depending on the context it can be translated:

"I was who I was."

"I am who I am."

"I shall be who I shall be."

In Exodus 3:14 the present tense fits best. But the potential of the verb form is bigger than that. When Moses said, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?", God answers in 3:12 with the same verb form used as a promise: "I will be with you." This should quieten Moses. He alone could do nothing. But he and the Lord with him can even overpower the superpower of that time, Egypt.

The LXX translates the "I am who I am" of 3:14 with the Greek Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν. *ēgō ēimi hō ōn*. "I am the being one." The time reference of the Greek participle used here has also to be understood from the context. It is a clever way to say that God is the eternal one. This becomes even clearer

106.

107.

אֱלֹהֵי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם אֲלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֲלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם

when we look at the interpretation of this name given by the Holy Spirit through the apostle John in Revelation 1:8:

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." ¹⁰⁸

In the Greek the first two words of 1:8 ("I am") combined with the "who is..." from the phrase "who is and who was and who is to come" are an exact quote of Ex 3:14. Every Greek speaking Jew familiar with his LXX-Bible would have recognized this at once because the passage was so famous. But the adding of the words "and who was and who is to come" is different. The full phrase "who is and who was and who is to come" speaks of God as past, present and future and brings the full force of the Hebrew verb form of Ex 3:14 to the foreground. The context of Rv 1:8 underlines that this means that God is eternal, he is "the Alpha and the Omega", which are the first and the last letter of the Greek alphabet, meaning "the First and the Last" (cf. Rv 1:17; 22:13; Is 41:4; 44:6; 48:12).

"God is alive" used in oath formulas.

The fact that the true God is alive, is seen as a fundamental truth and this is quite often used in oath formulas to affirm another statement one wants to be believed (Jgs 8:19; Ruth 3:13 and often more).

"As I live" can be used by God himself in an oath. The Bible teaches that God never lies (Nm 23:19; Heb 6:16-18). If God uses an oath he puts double weight on his statement to make sure that man knows to accept it as trustworthy (Nm 14:21,28; Jer 22:24); 46:18; Zep 2:9; Is 49:18).

If we combine the assurance that the true God is alive for ever with the fact that he is the source of life, then we have a strong foundation for the gift of eternal life rooted in God's own being and his loving kindness enduring for ever (Ps 136:1-26).

108. Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ Ἀλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, λέγει κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ.

Man and eternal life.

After Adam and Eve sinned, God condemned them to die at some point in the future (Gn 3:19) and he made sure that they had to leave the garden lest they should eat from the tree of life and live forever (Gn 3:22-24). If they had eaten in their sinful state, alienated from God, they would have stayed like this forever, they would have "lived forever".¹⁰⁹ God ordained their corporal death, so that he would open a door for their future salvation (Gn 3:15).

In contrast to all the other verses in the genealogy of Gn 5 which end with "and he died"¹¹⁰ (Gn 5:5.7.11.14.17.20.27.31), the fate of Enoch stands out (Gn 5:24):

Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

Adam and Eve enjoyed the fellowship with God in the garden of Eden in Gn 3. Now only two chapters later, we see a man living with God and then God took him to himself. Elijah's being taken up to heaven is another proof of the hope of man to be with God again and that forever (2 Kgs 2:11; cf. Mt 17:3).

A highly significant passage is found in Ex 32:32-33:

32 "But now, if you will forgive their sin - but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written." 33 But the Lord said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book."

Moses intercedes for the nation of Israel who had sinned. He wants God to forgive them and not to destroy them (see Ex 32:9-10). What does Moses

109. The phrase "to live forever" does not appear often in the Old Testament. It is used especially in a wish like "May the king live forever!" while someone is in the presence of the king and addresses him (Bathsheba in the presence of king David 1 Kgs 1:31; Nehemiah to King Artaxerxes of Persia Neh 2:3; the Chaldeans to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon Dn 2:4). Job suffers so much that he rejects the idea to live on forever like this (Job 7:16). About Zec 1:5 see below.

110. *וַיָּמָוֶה*

offer thinking that God perhaps is not willing to forgive just like that. He says God may blot the name of Moses out of a certain book. But God answers that only people who sin against God are blotted out of that book. This book can not relate to the little bit of life that was left of Moses life according to his own reckoning in Ps 90:10. Moses was already 80! What Moses offers is that his name might be erased out of the book which relates to eternal life in God's presence being a citizen of God's city. Some other texts of the Old Testament would agree with such an understanding of this book.

David wishes that certain sinners "be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous" (Ps 69:28). Is 4:3 is placed in an eschatological context and speaks of the holy remnant in Jerusalem explaining that this includes "everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem". Mal 3:16 which is also part of an eschatological context, knows of "a book of remembrance" that was written before God "of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name". Dn 12:1-3 speak of a book while predicting the resurrection of the dead:

... But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

The idea of resurrection implies the idea of eternal life and is found in other places of the Old Testament as well. In the song of Moses God can make alive from death (Dt 32:39). Hannah confesses that God can kill and bring to life again, bring down to Sheol and raise up again (1 Sm 2:6). At the end of Ps 22 all nations come and worship the true God. Even those who had died, come and eat and worship God (Ps 22:29). According to Is 25:6-8 God shall overcome death on the mountain of Zion, swallowing up death forever. The dead whom God wishes to get alive, will live (Is 26:19; cf. Hos 6:1-2; 13:14; Ez 37:1-14). The expected answer to the question in Zec 1:5: "And the prophets, do they live forever?", is often understood

to be "No! Of course not." But I think, if the answer is "Yes, sure they do!", that the introduction of Zechariah gains much. The fathers who were disobedient perished. The prophets who faithfully proclaimed the word of God are rewarded with living forever. That Zechariah has the idea of eternal life in his book is clear from Zec 12:10: The pierced one who got killed is alive again and coming to save Israel.

11.8.2 In the New Testament

The use of ἡ αἰώνιος ζωὴ for "the eternal life".

In the New Testament the word ἡ ζωὴ *zōē* means 1. life in the physical sense (e.g. Lk 16:25), 2. the supernatural life that God and Christ have and believers receive in future, but also enjoy in the present (e.g. Jn 5:24).¹¹¹ In the New Testament the adjective αἰώνιος, *on aiōniōs*, ὄν means "eternal" in the sense of 1. without beginning (Rom 16:25), 2. without beginning and without end (Rom 16:26), 3. without end (Lk 16:9).¹¹² We shall look at *zōē* in the New Testament as far as it denotes eternal life with or without the adjective *aiōniōs*.

God and eternal life.

Jesus gives a definition of eternal life in Jn 17:3:

And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.¹¹³

To know God and Jesus Christ is to have eternal life.

God's or Christ's words or commandments and eternal life. The words that Jesus Christ has spoken to the disciples "are spirit and life" (Jn 6:63; see also 6:68; 12:49-50). The gospel according to John was written to lead

111. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 672-3.

112. *ibid.*, p. 55-56.

113. αὕτη δέ ἐστιν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωὴ ἵνα γινώσκωσι σὲ τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν καὶ ὃν ἀπέστειλας Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.

people to faith in Jesus Christ and by doing so to eternal life (Jn 20:31). The apostles preached "the words of this life" (Acts 5:20). To reject the word of God is to reject eternal life. Those who have been appointed to eternal life by God, accept and believe the word of God (Acts 13:46.48). Speaking about the commandments of God's law Paul says according to the KJV in Rom 7:10: "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." If the Philippians are holding fast to the gospel as "the word of life", Paul did not labor in vain (Phil 2:16).

Christ and eternal life.

Through his own eternal life Christ is a priest for ever who can save for ever (Heb 7:3.15-17.25). In almost all of the verses given below eternal life is somehow related to Jesus Christ. To believe in him is to have eternal life. In Acts 3:15 he is the Author of life. 2 Tm 1:1 speaks of "the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus". In the following sections he himself is the life in person: Col 3:3.4; 1 Jn 1:1.2; 1 Jn 5:12.13.20; the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25); the way, and the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6).

The word "life" with the adjective "eternal". The phrase "eternal life" is used quite often in the New Testament (Mt 19:16; Mk 10:17; Lk 18:18; Mt 19:29; Mk 10:30; Lk 18:30; Mt 25:46; Lk 10:25; Jn 3:15.16; Jn 3:36; Jn 4:14; Jn 4:36; Jn 5:24-26; Jn 5:39-40; Jn 6:27; Jn 6:40.47.53; Jn 6:54; Jn 10:28; Jn 12:25; Jn 17:2; Rom 2:7; Rom 5:21; Rom 6:22.23; 1 Tm 1:16; 1 Tm 6:12; Tit 1:2; Tit 3:7; 1 Jn 2:25; 1 Jn 3:15; 1 Jn 5:11; Jude 1:21). It is a life that does never end.

Life in the sense of eternal life even without the adjective "eternal". The phrase "to enter life" means according to the context "to enter eternal life" (Mt 18:8.9; 19:17; Mk 9:43.45). In the following texts "life" seems also to be used in the sense of eternal life (Mt 7:14; Acts 11:18; 1 Tm 4:8; 1 Jn 5:16; Jn 10:10 abundant life; Ephesians 4:18 alienated from the life of God; 1 Tm 6:19 that which is truly life; 2 Tm 1:10 life and immortality; passing out of death into life (1 Jn 3:14; Jn 5:24).

Genitive constructions with life understood as eternal: Resurrection of life (Jn 5:29), bread of God, bread of life (Jn 6:33,35), bread of life, living bread (Jn 6:48,51), words of eternal life (Jn 6:68), light of life (Jn 8:12), the paths of life (Acts 2:28), justification of life, meaning life giving justification (Rom 5:18), newness of life (Rom 6:4), the crown of life (Jas 1:12; Rv 2:10), the grace of life (1 Pt 3:7), tree of life (Rv 2:7; 22:2,14,19), water of life (Rv 7:17; 21:6; 22:1,17).

Eternal life in contrast to eternal punishment. The following different phrases of punishment are used as the opposite of eternal life: To be thrown into the eternal fire (Mt 18:8), to be thrown into the hell of fire (Mt 18:9), to be thrown into hell (Mk 9:45), to be thrown into the lake of fire which is the second death (Rv 20:14-15), to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire (Mk 9:43), to go away into eternal punishment (Mt 25:46), the wrath of God remains on him (Jn 3:36), to come into judgment (Jn 5:24), to come out of the grave to the resurrection of judgment (Jn 5:29).

The Book of life. The book of life belongs to Jesus Christ and contains the names of all who will inherit eternal life. It was written before the foundation of the world. The names of Paul's fellow workers in Philippi "are in the book of life" (Phil 4:3). The name of the one who conquers Jesus will never blot out of the book of life (Rv 3:5). All who dwell on earth will worship the beast of Revelation 13, "everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain" (Rv 13:8; similar in 17:8).

The book of life will be opened at the time of the judgment of the dead (Rv 20:12-15). Permission to enter the New Jerusalem is given only to "those who are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rv 21:27).

God's servants and eternal life. Christ uses the sacrificial lives of his servants to bring life to others (2 Cor 2:16; 2 Cor 4:10-12).

The Holy Spirit and eternal life.

Jesus honors the Spirit as the one "who gives life". The words of Jesus are spirit and life (Jn 6:63). The law of the Spirit of life sets believers free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2). "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace" (Rom 8:6). "But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom 8:10). "The one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal 6:8).

Resurrection and transformation.

Jesus himself is "the resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25). Paul prefers to be transformed while still alive "so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life" (2 Cor 5:4). The two witnesses of God in Revelation 11 are made alive again when "a breath of life from God entered them" (Rv 11:11). Paul says about the Israelites in Rom 11:15:

For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world,
what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

When Jesus was rejected by Israel and crucified, the world was reconciled. Israel was set aside for the time when the gospel would be preached to all nations. But Paul predicts a time when Israel will be accepted again, not only single Israelites having faith, but the whole nation turning to God. When this happens, this will be "life from the dead". This could point to the day of resurrection. Then there would be a time relationship between Israel's acceptance and the second coming of Christ with the resurrection of the dead.

Chapter 12

Faith and Assurance

12.1 By Faith alone

So far we have seen that all the blessings of soteriology are somehow related to faith and obtained by faith. Those who believe in Jesus Christ receive these blessings, the believers of Israel or of the Gentile nations.

12.1.1 The blessings of salvation are obtained by faith and for faith.

Salvation, Lk 7:50, see section 11.1.2, atonement, Rom 3:25, see section 11.2.2, redemption and ransom; the believers have been redeemed to live a holy life by faith, 1 Pt 1:18-21, see section 11.3.2, reconciliation, Rom 5:1.9-11, see subsection 11.4.2, justification, Rom 3:21-28 see section 11.5.2, adoption or sonship, Gal 3:23-4:7, see subsection 11.6.2, regeneration, John 1:12-13, see section 11.7.2, eternal life, John 3:16, see section 11.8.2.

Especially when it comes to the subject of justification the apostle Paul heavily emphasizes that we are justified only by God's grace and by faith alone, not by any works of righteousness we might have done (Rom 3:23-28; Tit 3:5-7. Salvation is gained by faith alone. The works can only follow, but they also should follow (Tit 2:14; Gal 5:6; Jas 2:18-26).

12.1.2 The will of man in coming to faith.

Is there a free will in fallen man?

What is the role of the will of man in coming to faith or to conversion? Is there a free will in fallen man? When God created Adam and Eve, they had the freedom of choice to remain obedient to God or to disobey him (Gn 2:17). According to the Holy Scriptures it seems that man has lost this freedom, because his nature became so sinful and corrupt that God "saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gn 6:5). In response God sent the flood at the time of Noah as his first universal judgment on mankind. But even after the flood and after God had saved Noah and his family, he stated in Gn 8:21:

And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done."

To be sure man has a will, but this will is dominated by his sinful nature (Rom 3:9-12):

9 What then? Are we Jews any better off? 2 No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, 10 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

Because man is fallen under sin with all his capacities as a person, his will, his emotions and his thinking ability, he has become a slave to sin (Jn 8:34), led astray by the devil (Eph 2:1-2; Rv 12:9) and controlled by his own evil desires (James 1:14-15).

How then does somebody become willing to come to faith in Christ?

In John 6:37-40,44-45 Jesus says what is necessary to come to him and stay with him to get eternal life:

37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day... 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.

Accordingly we can produce this list to show what is necessary to come to Jesus and have life:

1. The Father gives a certain number of people to the Son.
2. All of them come to Jesus.
 - (a) People can only come to Jesus if the Father draws them to Jesus.
 - (b) People can only learn about Jesus, if they learn it from the Father.
3. Jesus accepts all of them and casts no-one out, for he has accepted the Father's will to lose nothing of all that the Father has given him.
4. Jesus raises all of them up on the last day.

In the context the coming to Jesus is the expression of faith in him (Jn 6:35). The coming to Jesus is brought about by the Father in 1. giving people to the Son, 2. drawing them to the Son, 3. teaching them about the Son. There is

no correspondent action of the people involved when the Father gives them to Jesus. But when the Father draws them to Jesus, their corresponding work is to be drawn to Jesus resulting in their coming to Jesus. And when the Father teaches them, their corresponding work is to hear it and learn it from the Father, meaning that they accept the truth and recognize Jesus. Again the result is that they come to Jesus. The giving of the Father to the Son could already have happened before the foundation of the world as some other texts seem to imply (Rv 17:8; Eph 1:3-4; 2 Tm 1:9). But the Father's drawing and the teaching them seems to happen while they are alive and answer with the coming and learning.

We can answer now our question from the beginning of this section: How then does somebody become willing to come to faith in Christ? He becomes willing, because the Father has given him to Christ, draws him to Christ and teaches him about Christ. He follows the drawing and comes, he accepts the teaching and learns it. The result is, he comes to Christ and receives eternal life, being raised from the dead on the last day.

Apart from Christ nobody can do anything of any spiritual value (John 15:5). This is also true for his willing to come to Christ and abide in him.

Very similar ideas could be shown from the letters of Paul. We shall see this when we look at Rom 9-11. For the time being a quote from Phil 2:12-13 might be enough:

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

12.1.3 Our Response - Confession and Repentance

When God the Father works in someone that he comes to Christ and recognizes the Son, then this person needs to respond and will respond in confession and repentance.

Confession

Words used. The noun *f. ἡ ὁμολογία hōmōlōgia* denotes the action of "confession" (2 Cor 9:13) and "confession" in the sense of what is confessed (Heb 3:1).¹

The verb *ὁμολογέω hōmōlōgēō* means "to confess."²

The adverb *ὁμολογουμένως hōmōlōgōumēnōs* is used in the sense of "acknowledged" in 1 Tm 3:16.

Jesus Christ and confession. In his testimony Jesus Christ made the good confession before Pontius Pilate and thus gave an example to all of his disciples (1 Tm 6:13). He is "the apostle and high priest of our confession" (Heb 3:1).

Since we have such a great high priest in him, "who has passed through the heavens" we should "hold fast our confession" (Heb 4:14) and that "without wavering, for he who promised is faithful" (Heb 10:23; cf. 2 Cor 9:13). Timothy was called to eternal life and has made about it "the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Tm 6:12). A good example for such an early confession of Jesus Christ could be 1 Tm 3:16:

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:
He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.

Necessity of confessing Jesus Christ for salvation. It is necessary to confess or acknowledge Jesus as Christ and Lord before men to get saved (Mt 10:32; Lk 12:8; 1 Jn 2:23; 4:15).

1. Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, p. 1126.

2. *ibid.*, p. 1126.

Often people who confess Jesus as the Christ or the Son of God have to suffer for it (Jn 9:22). That is the reason why many may believe in Jesus with their heart but will not confess him with their mouth (Jn 12:42). But both is necessary to get saved (Rom 10:9-10):

9 ... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

It is necessary to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God". The best way is to check their "Christology", their teaching about Jesus Christ (1 Jn 4:2-3):

2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

The core truth is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. That relates to Christology and the Trinity. Wherever the incarnation, the coming of Jesus as God in the flesh, is denied, the spirit of the antichrist is at work (2 Jn 1:7).

It is necessary that the way of life agrees with one's confession (Tit 1:16). Therefore everyone who confesses Christ as Lord should also confess his own sins and leave them to get cleansed by the blood of Christ (1 Jn 1:7,9).

Our salvation is rooted in the fact that Jesus Christ will confess our name as written in his book of life before the Father and his angels (Rv 3:5).

Repentance

Words used. The noun *f. ἡ μετάνοια* *mētanoīa* means "change of mind", "repentance", "conversion".³ The verb *μετανοέω* *mētanoēō* means "to

3. *ibid.*, p. 1013-14.

change one's mind", "to repent", "to convert".⁴

Message of John the Baptist about repentance. The summary of John the Baptist's message is found in Mt 3:2

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.⁵

The kingdom of God is a great chance and a great gift for Israel and mankind. But it is dangerous for those who are not prepared and who do not repent from their sins and their life far from God. If they do not bear fruit in keeping with repentance, they are cut down like bad trees and thrown into the fire of hell (Mt 3:8-12). John's baptism with water is a baptism for repentance (Mt 3:11)⁶ or "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk 1:4; cf. Lk 3:3)⁷. Those who get baptized show their willingness to repent from their sins and their life far from God and to become ready for the coming of Christ who is the king of the kingdom of God and mightier than John, not baptizing only with water but with the Spirit of God himself (Mt 3:11; Acts 19:4).

Message of Jesus Christ about repentance in the gospels. The summary of the message of Jesus is found in Mt 4:17 and is identical with John's message: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Greek imperative used here for the commandment of repentance has the durative aspect of the present tense stem which here either means 1. an ongoing or continuous action or 2. a repeated action.⁸ To repent is either ongoing or something which has to be done again and again. Perhaps the latter is preferable here: Whenever somebody sins, he needs to repent from his wrongdoing and be changed. That this is also necessary for already converted Christians is clear

4. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 1012-13.

5. Μετανοείτε, ἡγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

6. Ἐγὼ μὲν ὑμᾶς βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι εἰς μετάνοιαν•

7. ἐγένετο Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετάνοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.

8. Μετανοείτε mētanōēitē See Eddy Lanz, *Basic New Testament Greek* (Rawalpindi: Eved Adonai - Is 53:11, 2013), <http://www.lanz.li/grnt/basic-nt-greek/Basic-NT-Greek.pdf>, 2.3.1 Durative Stem Usage.

from many passages in the New Testament (2 Cor 7:9-10; Rv 2:5.16.21.22; 3:3.19).

Jesus has not come "to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Lk 5:32) teaching that "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Lk 15:7). The teaching of Jesus and his miracles were a divine invitation commanding for repentance. It is dangerous for people not to repent when being visited by such a wonderful word of God (Mt 11:20-22). The Risen One told the astonished disciples (Lk 24:46-47):

Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

According to this the Great Commission to evangelize all nations of the world is already found in the Old Testament and it is a proclamation of a movement of repentance promising the forgiveness of sins to the repentant sinners. This is for Israel (Acts 5:31) and the Gentiles (Acts 11:18; 17:30; 26:20).

Repentance in the remainder of the New Testament. The ability to repent is a gift of God (2 Tm 2:25) whose "kindness is meant to lead ... to repentance" (Rom 2:4). God may also cause grief to lead people to repentance (2 Cor 7:9-10). According to Acts 2:38 repentance is necessary to receive the Holy Spirit.

In the last days people may think about the coming of the day of the Lord that it comes late or never, but the apostle Peter assures his readers (2 Pt 3:8-9):

8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

God waits patiently with the coming of his day so that people may reach repentance. It is God's will for salvation of all (1 Tm 2:4; 4:10) that lets him wait. This also implies that after the day of the Lord there is no chance of repentance. It has to happen before. It is possible to be too late (Heb 12:17). There is also the possibility of a kind of apostasy which blocks any way to repentance (Heb 6:6). During the last part of the last days the vast majority of mankind will not repent even under the severe blows of enormous judgments of God (Rv 9:20,21; 16:9,11). This will make any more patient waiting of God for their repentance superfluous and his day will come like a thief in the night (Rv 16:15; 2 Pt 3:9-10).

12.2 Through Grace alone

12.2.1 Word used.

The noun f. ἡ χάρις charis means 1. grace, charm, loveliness (Lk 4:22; Col 4:6) 2. grace, favor (Lk 2:40; Rom 3:24).⁹

12.2.2 The Holy Trinity and grace.

The grace of God the Father.

As the source of all grace God is called "the God of all grace" (1 Pt 5:10). When Barnabas came to Antioch and "saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose" (Acts 11:23). The grace of God which he saw was the revival amongst the Gentiles there who had come in great numbers to faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior. In Antioch Pisidia Paul and Barnabas urged the converts to Christ "to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43).

9. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 1734-7.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The fact that God became man in Jesus Christ is "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). In Tit 2:11 the coming of Christ is put in these words:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

The grace of God in Christ is for everyone because "by the grace of God" Jesus tasted "death for everyone" (Heb 2:9). John writes that God became man in Jesus as the Son of God "full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). "And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn 1:16-17). In the great discussion about how the believers of the Gentiles can get saved, Peter says in Acts 15:11 that "we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will".

The Spirit and grace.

In Heb 10:29 the Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of grace" which presents him as grace-giving Spirit. This overview shows that God's grace reaches us through every person of the Holy Trinity.

12.2.3 Election of grace.

Paul presents the seven thousand men of the time of Elijah as an example for God's choosing by grace (Rom 11:4-6):

"I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.¹⁰

10. 5 οὕτως οὖν καὶ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ λείμμα κατ' ἐκλογὴν χάριτος γέγονεν• 6 εἰ δὲ χάριτι, οὐκέτι ἐξ ἔργων, ἐπεὶ ἡ χάρις οὐκέτι γίνεται χάρις.

Elijah did not know about the seven thousand. He deemed himself as the only one left and was depressed even to death. God's answer showed him that God's work with Israel was not at an end. Paul takes this as a principle of election by grace and says about his own time in the middle of the first century, "So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace." God's grace stands here in contrast to works and merits on the side of us human beings. Paul's idea is that they did not bow their knee to Baal not because they were better than all the rest, but because of God's grace saying: "I have kept for myself seven thousand men..." Paul thinks that God's grace worked in them with the result that they did not bow to Baal. First is God's grace and then comes the life showing forth the fruit of this grace. It is important to note that in Paul's writings God's grace stands often in contrast to the works of man, but it does not stand in contrast to the faith of man. Election is not on the basis of the works of the law, because no-one could have fulfilled all the demands of God's law (see Gal 3:10-14). But election implies that those who are elected will practice faith.

Jude speaks of people "who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ". They were "long ago ... designated for this condemnation, ungodly people"¹¹ (Jude 1:4). As we have a positive "book of life" of Jesus Christ (Rv 13:8; 17:8) where the names of God's elect are written, Jude here seems to think that the names of these ungodly people were also noted but for condemnation. This gives the picture that those who are chosen by God's grace get saved and those who "pervert the grace of ... God" get lost.

12.2.4 **Salvation is through Grace alone.**

This was a strong emphasis during the time of the Reformation. The reformers got this emphasis mainly from the letters of Paul in the New Testament, especially Romans and Galatians.

11. οἱ πάλαι προγεγραμμένοι εἰς τοῦτο τὸ κρίμα, ἀσεβεῖς

Salvation through grace.

Because all have sinned they can not be saved through works, but only by God's grace, God's personal favor bestowed upon them (Rom 3:23-24). By God's grace we are his children (Eph 1:3-6), "according to the riches of his grace" we have forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Christ (Eph 1:7). We were dead in our sins and were "following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (Eph 2:1-2), but then God took action (Eph 2:4-10):

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

According to this salvation is by grace and even a holy life of good works is prepared by God's grace beforehand.

Salvation not by works of the law.

Paul argues starting from Gn 15:6 that Abraham is an example of someone who was saved by God's grace and not by his own works of righteousness, because "to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due" (Rom 4:4). It was important that God's promise for Abraham was not based on the law, but on grace and on faith so that it surely would be fulfilled (Rom 4:13-16).

Paul more than once explains that the two ways of righteousness by grace and faith on the one hand and by righteousness through the works of

the law on the other are mutually exclusive. You can not walk both ways. Either Christ or the law (Gal 5:2-4):

2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. 3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.

Paul likes to put an emphasis on this fact that we can not get saved by the works of the law or by our own works (Gal 2:21; Tit 3:5-7). In 2 Tm 1:9 he even says that God "saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began".

12.2.5 The stand of grace.

Through Christ "we have ... obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand" (Rom 5:2). The rule of grace in Christ is stronger than the enslaving rule of sin and leads to eternal life (Rom 5:15,17,20,21). Do be under grace does not mean that we could or should continue to sin (Rom 6:1), but we should live a righteous life for God based on the fact that we have died with Christ and so are dead to sin and under God's grace (Rom 6:14-15; cf. Gal 1:6).

12.2.6 Effects of grace.

We can be strong through grace in Christ (2 Tm 2:1) and our heart can be "strengthened by grace" (Heb 13:9). A good example for different effects of grace is the life of Paul.

God's grace in Paul's life. It was God's pleasure to call Paul through his grace and let him be an apostle of Christ among the Gentiles (Gal 1:15-16). This calling and grace of God in Paul's life was recognized by other great leaders of the first century church, by James and Cephas and John (Gal 2:9). By God's grace Paul became a very effective and successful apostle

(1 Cor 15:10). But he never forgot what kind of enemy of Christ he had been before and how guilty he had become by persecuting the church of God. "For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor 15:9). "To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8). In 1 Tm 1:12-16 he calls himself even the "foremost" or the "worst" of sinners.

Paul's life is an astonishing example of the grace of God. It is no wonder that he uses this word more than any other in his letters. Paul's greetings very often include the wish of God's grace for the recipients (Rom 1:7; Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 6:18 etc.).

His willingness to serve God even in suffering meant that God's grace extended to more and more people and increased thanksgiving, to the glory of God (2 Cor 4:15). Often he had great pain in his body, but he accepted his weakness together with Christ's promise: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9).

12.2.7 **How to receive grace.**

It is good to draw again and again "near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16). To be humble is a good attitude to receive God's grace (Jas 4:6; 1 Pt 5:5). We should set our "hope fully on the grace that will be brought to" us "at the revelation of Jesus Christ", that is his second coming (1 Pt 1:13). We should not receive God's grace in vain (2 Cor 6:1) but in order to bring "holiness to completion in the fear of God" (2 Cor 7:1).

12.3 Election and Predestination by God

12.3.1 Words Used in the Old Testament

God and בָּחַר *bāḥar*.

The verb בָּחַר *bāḥar* means "to choose".¹² It is used with humans as subject and with God as well. We concentrate here on the passages where God chooses.

God elects one nation as his chosen people. God elected Abraham (Neh 9:7) or the seed of Abraham, Israel (Is 41:8-9) or the fathers and their seed (Dt 4:37). He has chosen Israel to be his people from all nations, out of love to keep the oath to the fathers (Dt 7:6-8; Dt 10:15; 14:2; 1 Kgs 3:8; Ps 33:12; 47:5; 135:4). One time of the election of Israel was the time of the exodus from Egypt (Ez 20:5). But this election of Israel is lasting even after the judgment of the exile (Is 14:1; 44:1-2).

God elects the priest, his family and his tribe. He does not elect Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Nm 16:5.7) but Aaron from the tribe of Levi to be the high priest (17:5; 18:5; 1 Sm 2:28; 1 Chr 15:2; 2 Chr 29:5.11; Ps 105:26). The priests from Levi also function as judges (Dt 21:5). God's judgments at the time of Jeremiah do not mean that the election of David's house and of the house of Levi has ceased (Jer 33:21-24).

God elects the king. Moses prophecies this as a future thing and gives the rule that he should be no foreigner (Dt 17:15). God grants the wish of Israel for a king and chooses the tall Saul to the joy of Israel (1 Sm 10:24). After the rejection of Saul Samuel is ordered to anoint one of the sons of Jesse, not the elder brothers of David (1 Sm 16:8.9.10), but David the youngest of them (2 Sm 6:21). Hushai speaks to Absalom deceiving him to save David. He says that he is serving the king chosen by the people and by God (2 Sm 16:18). The election of David still has an influence on history for

12. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 103.

generations to come (1 Kgs 11:34; Ps 89:19-20). God has chosen Judah and especially David (1 Chr 28:4; 2 Chr 6:5.6). Psalms 78:67-71 mention the election of David, Judah and of Zion, not of Joseph or Ephraim. Solomon was chosen to be king and build the temple (1 Chr 28:5.6.10; 29:1). God's judgments at the time of Jeremiah do not mean that the election of David's house and of the house of Levi has ceased (Jer 33:21-24).

God also chooses individual persons for certain purposes. He chooses people to dwell in his courts (Ps 65:4). This statement in this psalm of David may point to priests. Isaiah 43:10 talks either of Israel as the servant or of the personal servant (cf. Isaiah 49:7 a prophecy about Jesus). Haggai 2:23 speaks of Zerubbabel as God's servant being chosen. This may relate to the fact that he was a son of David and the especially chosen one in his own time out of all the other sons of David. Jer 49:19 and 50:44 talk of of a chosen one with regard to the judgment over Edom or over Babylon respectively who is chosen and set over them by God.

God chooses the unique place of worship. Dt 12:5.11.14; 12:18.21.26; 14:23.24.25; 15:20; 16:2; 16:6.7; 16:11.15.16; 17:8.10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11; Jo 9:27. From the exodus to David God did not choose a city for a temple to be built, but under Solomon he has fulfilled his promise to David that a son of his will build a temple in the city God has chosen, Jerusalem (1 Kgs 8:16.44.48; 2 Chr 6:5.6.; 2 Chr 6:34.38). God has accepted Solomon's prayer and chosen this house as his temple (2 Chr 7:12.16).

Even after the sins of Solomon the election of Jerusalem still had an ongoing influence in salvation history (1 Kgs 11:13; 11:32.36; 14:21; 2 Kgs 21:7; 2 Chr 12:13; 33:7; Ps 132:13). But 2 Kgs 23:27 pronounces God's judgment that the chosen Jerusalem will be cast off. Nehemiah reminds God of his promise to gather the exiles back to the chosen city (Neh 1:9). Psalms 78:67-71 speak of the election of David, Judah and of Zion, not of Joseph or Ephraim. The prophet Zechariah knows of the renewal of Jerusalem's election after the exile (1:17; 2:12; 3:2).

Certain things are choice goods for God or are chosen by him: justice and righteousness (Prv 21:3 and the right fast (Isaiah 58:5-6). It can also happen that God chooses harsh treatment for sinners (Is 66:4).

God and יָדָע yāda'.

The verb יָדָע yāda' means "to know".¹³ In some places it is used for God's election of people, to know somebody and single him out. Amos 3:2:

You only have I known of all the families of the earth;¹⁴
therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

God has a unique relationship with Israel. He has made himself known to Israel as to no other nation. And he knows and loves them in a special way. But this does not mean that they will go unpunished. They have received more than any other nation and therefore their responsibility is greater in God's judgment (cf. Lk 12:47-48). When God calls Jeremiah, he reveals a stunning fact to him (Jer 1:5):

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.¹⁵

God knew Jeremiah already before he even was in the smallest possible form in existence, being conceived in his mothers womb. This is about God's election before we are in existence. And God consecrated him, made him holy before he was born. God ordained him to be a prophet long before his time of coming into knowledge and learning about God. We know that the prophet Jeremiah struggled with his calling, but he became the prophet God wanted him to be (Jer 20:7-18; 15:16). God's election and predestination clearly is a mystery, but it is also a reality.

13. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 393-4.

14.

רַק אֶתְכֶם יָדַעְתִּי מִכָּל מְשֻׁפָּחוֹת הָאָדָמָה

15. בְּטָרִם אֶצְוֹרֶךְ * [אֶצְוֹרֶךְ] בְּכֶטֶן יָדַעְתִּיךָ וּבְטָרִם תֵּצֵא מִרְחֶם הַקִּדְשִׁיךָ נָבִיא לְגוֹיִם
נִתְּתִיךָ:

12.3.2 Words Used in the New Testament

The use of ἐκλέγομαι "to choose".

The verb ἐκλέγομαι *ēklēgōmai* means "to choose, to elect".¹⁶

God elects. God had chosen the forefathers of Israel and liberated the nation from the slavery in Egypt (Acts 13:17). Jesus Christ as the Son of God is especially chosen and should therefore be heard and obeyed (Lk 9:35). This voice of God the Father corrected Peter's mistake to put Jesus on an equal footing with Moses and Elijah.

God chooses those who are his own and shortens the days of the great tribulation because of them (Mk 13:20). In the discussion about the question what the Gentile believers need to get saved Peter points out "that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe" (Acts 15:7). What Peter wants to affirm is that he has a special say in this matter, because God had chosen him to open the door of repentance for Gentile believers through his sermon in the house of Cornelius (Acts 11:15-18).

Looking at the church in Corinth Paul declares God's way of choosing people (1 Cor 1:26-28):

26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

James agrees totally with this (James 2:5). With regard to the time of our election Paul praises God the Father that he chose us in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph 1:4).

16. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 480.

Christ elects. Christ chooses the twelve apostles (Lk 6:13), knowing that one of them was a devil (Jn 6:70) who loved money more than the Lord and would become his traitor selling him to the enemy (Jn 13:18.26-27; 12:6), becoming the son of destruction or lostness (17:12). This shows that the word election or being elected does not always include eternal salvation. All twelve had been chosen to be apostles, but only eleven would inherit eternal life, one would get lost because of his lack of faith and his openness to the works of the devil. Jesus later completed the number twelve again by adding Matthias to the apostles (Acts 1:2.24) after Judas had lost his office and his life (Acts 1:18-20).

The context must be looked at to determine for what people have been chosen. In this way Jesus says in Jn 15:16.19:

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you... 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Jesus has chosen his disciples not vice versa. His electing love comes first, then their willingness to follow him, to "abide in him" the true vine and bring forth abiding fruit. His election also makes them strangers in the world. He has taken them out of the world and united with him triggering the hatred of the world.

Some people choose worldly things. Jesus was teaching not to choose places of honor but to prefer humility (Lk 14:7).

Believers choose. Mary, sister of Martha, sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching choosing the good portion, which was not taken away from her (Lk 10:42). The church in Jerusalem chose seven men to help supporting the widows on a daily basis (Acts 6:5). The people of the council in Jerusalem chose Judas and Silas to go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:22.25).

The use of ἐκλεκτός "chosen".

The adjective ἐκλεκτός, ἡ, όν *ēklēktōs* means "chosen, elect".¹⁷

Used absolute without saying who has chosen. Often God is implied as the person who chooses. In the famous word of Jesus "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Mt 22:14), the called are all who hear the invitation of the gospel, but the chosen ones are those who really accept the gospel and live it out. They are those who God has chosen (Mk 13:20; cf. Mt 24:22). "False christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Mt 24:24; Mk 13:22), but Christ warns his people that they do not fall into this trap (Mt 24:23-27).

One great motivation for the apostle Paul to keep on going in his sufferings was to "endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tm 2:10). Peter encourages the Gentile believers in their sufferings by applying the words of Ex 19:5-6 and Is 43:21 and adding the idea of their election to it (1 Pt 2:9). John honors and encourages believers in a similar way (2 Jn 1:1.13). The ten kings of Rv Jn 17:12-14 will fight with Jesus, but he will win the battle "for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful." In this case the group of the called and the group of the chosen and faithful is identical. This is a different use than we have seen in Mt 22:14 where the two groups are not identical. This again shows how important it is to look into the context of the used words to determine their content.

God chooses or the Lord. The following verses speak clearly of God or the Lord choosing or having chosen people (Mk 13:20; Lk 18:7; Rom 8:33; Col 3:12; Titus 1:1). From Rom 16:13 we can learn that knowledge about somebody who is chosen can relate not only to a group, but to a single individual person like Rufus who is "chosen in the Lord".

Peter writes his first letter (1 Pt 1:1-2)

17. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 481.

... To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion
 in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,
 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,
 in the sanctification of the Spirit,
 for obedience to Jesus Christ and
 for sprinkling with his blood...

Note that they are "elect ... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father".¹⁸ The biblical teaching of election and predestination is beyond comprehension for our temporary human minds because we do not have the ability of God to foresee everything from the beginning and to be not subjected to time. God is the Creator of and Master of time, not the slave of it (2 Pt 3:8; Ps 90:1-4; Gn 1:1.5; Rv 1:8.17-18).

Christ chooses or the Son of Man. In these sections Christ or the Son of Man has chosen his people from all directions of the world and gathers them through the angels at the time of his second coming (Mt 24:31; Mk 13:27).

Christ is said to be the chosen one. Using the picture of the chosen and living corner stone for Christ Peter very nicely shows that the election of Christ is the foundation of all other elections. All other living stones have to come to Christ and enter the building through Christ (1 Pt 2:4.6). Paul presents a very similar idea when he says that God the Father has chosen us "in Christ" before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:3-4).

The builders who rejected Christ mocked him in his state of rejection that he should save himself "if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" (Lk 23:35). Little did they know that this rejected stone would become through his rejection, crucifixion and rising from the dead the cornerstone of a new building of God lasting in all eternity (1 Pt 2:7-10).

Angels who have been chosen. The Bible does not only speak of chosen men but also of chosen angels (1 Tm 5:21):

18. ἐκλεκτοῖς ... κατὰ πρόγνωσιν θεοῦ πατρός

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

The use of ἡ ἐκλογή "election".

The noun f. ἡ ἐκλογή *ēklōgē* means 1. active "the election" (Rom 11:5) and 2. passive "what is chosen, the elect" Rom 11:7).¹⁹

Used absolute without saying who has chosen. God is implied as the person who chooses. In these verses *ēklōgē* denotes the action of choosing. The grace is the grace of God who chooses his elect (Rom 11:5). The apostle Paul says about the Jews who do not believe in Jesus as the Christ (Rom 11:28):

As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.²⁰

Because God has chosen Abraham, Isaak, Jacob and David and gave them certain promises, "they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers". This is one reason why Paul believes in the final conversion of the whole remnant of Israel at the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ (Rom 11:29).

Paul assures the Thessalonian Christians that God has chosen them "because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thes 1:4-5).

In Rom 11:7 *ēklōgē* denotes the group of people which is chosen: "The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened."

God is the one who chooses. God had chosen Jacob not Esau. He had proclaimed it before their birth and before their good or bad works happened, "in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call" (Rom 9:11).

19. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 481.

20. κατὰ μὲν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἔχθροὶ δι' ὑμᾶς, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογὴν ἀγαπητοὶ διὰ τοὺς πατέρας•

Jesus Christ is the one who chooses. Paul is chosen by Christ, the purpose for which he is chosen is given (Acts 9:15-16):

Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.

Believers should make their calling and election sure. Often when election is taught, teachers put a great emphasis on the fact that this is God's doing alone. And that is a true and good emphasis. But often they have the tendency to minimize human responsibility in the action of salvation. Peter gives us a statement which puts the whole perspective more in balance (2 Pt 1:10):

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.²¹

The use of προτίθεμαι "to set forth".

The middle verb προτίθεμαι *prōtithēmai* means 1. to put forward, to place publicly (Rom 3:25), 2. to plan, to intend, to set forth, to decide (Eph 1:9; Rom 1:13).²²

Used related to election or predestination. This verb is used in a section which is quite famous when it comes to the discussion of election and predestination (Eph 1:9-12

... 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ²³ 10 as a plan for

21. διὸ μᾶλλον, ἀδελφοί, σπουδάσατε βεβαίαν ὑμῶν τὴν κλῆσιν καὶ ἐκλογὴν ποιεῖσθαι• ταῦτα γὰρ ποιοῦντες οὐ μὴ πταίσητέ ποτε•

22. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 1432.

23. γνωρίσας ἡμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν αὐτοῦ ἣν προέθετο ἐν αὐτῷ

the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

According to "his purpose" or "his plan" God wants "to unite all things" in Christ. This plan God set forth in Christ. According to God's plan we have "been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will". So whatever God does, he does with a purpose and according to his own plan. It remains to be seen what elements God includes in his plan or what rules or principles he incorporates in it. One thing which he seems to include is the foreseen faith of the believers.

The use of ἡ πρόθεσις "exposition, purpose".

The noun f. ἡ πρόθεσις *prōthēsis* means 1. exposition (Mt 12:4) and 2. purpose, plan, intension, decision, will (Rom 8:28).²⁴

Used related to divine election or predestination. According to Rom 8:28 "... all things work together for good, for those who are called according to" God's "purpose". His purpose also determined that Jacob was elected and not Esau (Rom 9:11). We have already seen that we have been predestined according to God's purpose (Eph 1:11) which is also called "the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus²⁵ our Lord" (Eph 3:11). Paul can speak of "God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began" (2 Tm 1:9).

24. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 1400.

25. κατὰ πρόθεσιν τῶν αἰώνων ἦν ἐποίησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

The use of προγινώσκω "to foreknow".

The verb προγινώσκω *prōginōskō* means "to know before", "to foreknow", "to choose before" (Rom 8:29).²⁶

Used related to divine election or predestination. Those whom God "foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29). Seeing that so many Israelites have rejected Jesus, Paul asks whether God has "rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew" (Rom 11:1-2). What God has done according to Paul is that he has divided Israel in two portions, one elected and one hardened. Paul himself as a Benjaminite is proof that this elected portion exists which resembles the 7000 of the time of Elijah which God has kept for himself "who have not bowed the knee to Baal" (11:2-6).

Peter speaks of Christ as the lamb whose blood became our ransom and who "was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times" for our sake (1 Pt 1:20).

The use of ἡ πρόγνωσις "foreknowledge".

The noun *f. ἡ πρόγνωσις* *prōgnōsis* means "foreknowledge" and is used twice in the New Testament.²⁷

Acts 2:23 speaks of Jesus who was "delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" and whom "you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men".²⁸ The phrase here translated with "the definite plan and foreknowledge" can be understood as a hendiadys: The foreknowledge is not just something foreseen, but something fore-willed and fore-planned. At the same time the murderers of Jesus are responsible for their crimes related to his crucifixion. God's plan and the responsibility of

26. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 1395-6.

27. *ibid.*, p. 1396.

28. τοῦτον τῇ ὀρισμένῃ βουλῇ καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ ἔκδοτον διὰ χειρὸς ἀνόμων προσπήξαντες ἀνείλατε

human beings do not exclude each other, but God's planning foresees and includes the behavior of the human actors in salvation history.

The same is true for Peter's readers in 1 Pt 1:2 who are "elect exiles ... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood". Their election is according to God's foreknowledge, is realized through the sanctification carried out by God's Spirit and happens with the expressed purpose that their relationship with Jesus Christ is such that they obey him and are continuously cleansed by the power of his blood.

The use of προορίζω "to predestine".

The verb προορίζω *prōōrizō* means "to predestine" (Acts 4:28).²⁹ In all six verses the words are used related to divine election or predestination. "Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel" could only do to Jesus whatever God's hand and his plan "had predestined to take place" (Acts 4:28). In one of his central sections about divine predestination the apostle Paul teaches how all things and the whole world have to work together for the good of God's special chosen people (Rom 8:28-30):

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

God's work in his salvation program for his people includes his 1. purpose, 2. foreknowledge, 3. predestination, 4. calling, 5. justification, 6. glorification.

As the predestination in Rom 8:29 is related to being children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ, so it is related in Eph 1:5 to be God's

29. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 1406.

children. A few verses onwards (Eph 1:11) our predestination is related to the fact that in Christ "we have obtained an inheritance". We remember that being a child and being an heir belongs together. According to 1 Cor 2:7 God has decreed his own secret and hidden wisdom "before the ages for our glory."

The use of ὁρίζω "to determine".

The verb ὁρίζω *hōrizō* means 1. "to determine" (Lk 22:22), 2. "to appoint" (Acts 17:31), 3. "to define".³⁰

Used related to divine determination. Christ's sufferings were predestined (Lk 22:22; Acts 2:23). Jesus Christ "is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42; very similar: 17:31). Jesus Christ "was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1:4).

The areas of the nations were determined by God (Acts 17:26). God determines a time and a day to hear God's voice and orders not to harden one's heart (Heb 4:7).

12.3.3 Rom 9-11: God's Ways with Israel

The longest context in the Bible related to election and predestination is found in Rom 9 to 11. Many would agree that it is also the most important. I have therefore made an attempt to present and summarize its main ideas in the following statements.

1. The apostle Paul begins with sharing his enormous burden of intercession for his unbelieving fellow Israelites (9:1-2), continues in this attitude of prayer (10:1) and concludes his discourse with praising God (11:33-36). This context of prayer and adoration has to be kept in mind while looking at Rom 9-11.

30. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 1151.

2. The fact that not all Israelites acknowledge Jesus as the Christ (9:5) does not mean that the word of God has failed (9:6). For from the beginning not all carnal descendants of Israel or Abraham were also children of God, but only the children of the promise (9:7-8).
3. The decision who is and who is not a child of promise is based on God's election (9:11).
4. God elects not according to the works of men but according to his own grace. Human works stand in opposition to God's grace. Human faith is not in opposition to God's grace (9:12; 9:30-10:21; 11:5-6).
5. In giving his grace God can prefer one man (e.g. Jacob) and reject the other (e.g. Esau; 9:13).
6. Sinful man has no claim to receive grace. By not giving his grace to somebody God is not unjust (9:14-21).
7. If God favors somebody with his grace, he expresses his own mercy and love (9:15-16).
8. While the grace of God has no cause in man, but only in God's will to show grace, the wrath of God is caused by the sins of man.
9. When God hardens man, he does not make a sinless man a sinner, but he hands an already sinful man in such a way over to his sinfulness that he will not be able to repent (9:17-18; 11:7-10).
10. God's hardening of the sinner is related to the will of God to show his wrath and make known his power (9:17-18.22).
11. It is to be kept in mind with regard to the hardening of the sinner that Rom 9-11 is about Israel and that in this context the hardening has a purpose and a time limitation:
 - (a) Through the hardening of a great part of Israel (11:1-10) salvation has come to the Gentiles. After this has now happened the individual Israelites can be made jealous instigating them to gain salvation too (11:11-14).

- (b) When the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, the partial hardening of Israel will stop and the whole remnant of the Israel of that time will be saved (11:25-27.30-32).

12. In showing wrath God remains just. His judgments are holy.
13. God calls Jews and Gentiles to the same salvation and the same glory (9:23-26).
14. God saves only a small remnant in comparison to the whole number of the descendants of Israel. This does not put God's power and capability into question. Quite on the contrary his power is especially shown through his judgment of the vessels of wrath. His ability to save is wonderfully presented in the fact that he gives his people a remnant at all and does not destroy them like Sodom and Gomorrah (9:22.27-29).
15. Rom 9:6-29 present God's greatness and sovereignty and prove that God's word has not become invalid because of the lack of faith of many Israelites. The problem that many Israelites do not believe in Jesus as the Christ is here looked at more from the perspective of God's work.
 In Rom 9:30-10:21 the same problem of the lack of faith of many Israelites is now looked at more from the perspective of Israel's doing, that means more from the human side of things.
 Both perspectives present the same reality, neither can be neglected: The work of God on the one hand and the responsibility of man on the other.
16. The decisive mistake of the (unbelieving) Israelites is that they seek a righteousness according to the works of the law and not by faith in Jesus Christ. By "seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness" (10:3; see 9:30-10:3).
17. The final target of the law is the coming Christ. Everybody who misses Christ, misses the purpose of the law (10:4).

18. Only those gain righteousness and salvation who believe in their heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord (10:5-11).
19. The way of salvation by faith is open for Jews and Greeks (and so for all men). The same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him in a prayer of faith (10:12-13).
20. Rom 10:14-15 argue that only those who have heard the gospel can be saved by faith in Jesus Christ. God's way of salvation for all of mankind includes the following steps:
 - (a) Christ has accomplished redemption (Rom 3:21-31).
 - (b) God sends preachers of this good news.
 - (c) The preacher brings the good news.
 - (d) People hear the good news.
 - (e) They believe the good news.
 - (f) They call on the Lord with faith who is rich enough for all men to save them.
 - (g) The Lord saves those who believe.
21. But not all Israelites have believed the gospel, even though the whole nation has been reached in their own country and in the Diaspora. The reason is that Israel did not understand the gospel (10:2-3.16-19) and did therefore not accept God's hands held out to them (10:21).
22. God's hands were really held out to them, that means that God really wanted them to return to him. God's offer of his grace and salvation was real, but Israel did not seek the offered righteousness of grace, because she was busy establishing her own righteousness (10:21.2-3).
23. Because Israel rejected the primary offer (cf. 1:16) of the gospel, God wants to make the Israelites jealous by evangelizing and saving Gentiles to instigate the Israelites to gain salvation by coming to Christ (10:19-20; 11:11.13-14).

24. God has not rejected his people, the Israelites because there is still a remnant of Israel according to God's gracious election which is to be distinguished from the other part which has been hardened in "retribution" for its sins (11:1-10).
25. The Israelites who stumbled, did not stumble in order that they might fall and remain destroyed on the ground, but for the purpose that salvation may "come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous" (11:11). There is still hope for them that they may return to God (11:13-14.23-24).
26. The Gentiles profited from the temporary hardening of a part of Israel because in consequence God granted them a worldwide time of salvation through the proclamation of the gospel. If this sad cause with regard to Israel brought so much salvation to the world, what great blessings should we expect when God will finally accept the whole remnant of Israel? If "their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?" This means probably that the time of rapture and resurrection happen after the re-acceptance of Israel or coincide with it, according to 11:25-26 perhaps the latter (11:12.15-16.25-27).
27. Gentiles who have come to faith in Jesus Christ have been grafted in the cultivated olive tree. Jews who did not believe in Jesus as the Christ, have been broken off. This means that Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus Christ are part of one body of salvation and united by their faith in Christ. Faith brings into the body of salvation, disbelief breaks off (11:17-24).
28. Gentile believers are warned not to be arrogant towards Israel, but to fear God and to contemplate the kindness and severity of God. Paul presents both possibilities: That the Jews may come to faith in Christ and be grafted in again and that the Gentile who does not continue in God's kindness will be cut off (11:20-24).
29. The Jews who do not believe in Jesus Christ, are enemies (of God) for the sake of the believing Gentiles as regards the gospel. "But as

regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers" (11:28). Therefore they have a future under the love of God "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (11:29).

30. Just as at one time the Gentiles were disobedient to God but now they have received mercy because of the disobedience of the Israelites, so the Israelites are now disobedient to God because of God's mercy shown to the Gentiles so that they also may now receive mercy (9:30-31).
31. The final word and climax of the argument in Rom 9-11 is 11:32, after this there is only praise and adoration of God: "For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all."³¹ This relates to Gentiles and Jews. The first part of 11:32 presents literally the idea that God has closed the door of a room with a key where all had entered, perhaps by their own sinful choice, but then God shut the door and locked it. The room is the room of disobedience. God let them suffer the consequences of their sin for some time, only to open the door again and have mercy on all of them, meaning Jews and Gentiles alike. Cf. the explanations to the temporary hardening of the Jews above (9:18ff and 11:1-11).
32. God's ways with Israel, as discussed by the apostle Paul, surpass all human understanding. At the end of this discourse is not a rationalizing Philosopher on his chair, but a worshiping apostle on his knees praising God (11:33-36).
33. All of the universe - Israel and the Gentiles are only a part of it - has its origin in God's creative power, is sustained by him and has to serve him. Therefore this discourse about God's ways with Israel (Rom 9-11) concludes with a statement of God's eternal adoration: "To him be glory forever. Amen" (11:36).

31. 32 συνέκλεισεν γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς πάντας εἰς ἀπειθειαν ἵνα τοὺς πάντας ἐλεήσῃ.

12.4 Perseverance

The idea of the perseverance of the saints is closely related to the teaching of election and predestination by God. If salvation depends on God's mercy and not on human will or exertion (Rom 9:16), then a person gets saved, if and when God has mercy on him. If salvation is based on God's fore-knowing, predestining, calling, justifying and glorifying somebody (Rom 8:29-30), then God is able to do all of this without getting him lost (see Rom 8:31-39; John 10:25-30). We remember John 6:39:

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

Faith in the perseverance of the saints implies that it is not only the will of the Father that Jesus should lose nothing of all that he has given him, but that Jesus is indeed able to preserve every single believer to the end and does it. The apostle John seems to have believed in the perseverance of the saints (1 Jn 2:18-19):

18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

One of the greatest challenges of the last days are the Antichristian movements. But even in this context John believes that the true Christians continue with Christ and the church of Christ. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us." This clearly implies that somebody who has really been born again, carries on living with Christ. There are Antichrists and they have come out of the area of the Christian church. But they did not really belong to "us". Our experience is that people come to the church and to the gospel, stay for a while and then leave again. Some even develop into false teachers

and false prophets. Some even might claim to be the "Christ". But John is convinced that the real ones stay.

What profit comes from the teaching of the perseverance of the saints? It honors God by honoring his grace and his protecting power.

12.5 Sanctification

12.5.1 Words used.

The noun f. ἡ ἁγιότης hagiōtēs means "holiness" (2 Cor 1:12; Heb 12:10).³²

The noun f. ἡ ἁγιωσύνη hagiōsynē means "holiness" (Rom 1:4; 2 Cor 7:1; 1 Thes 3:13).³³

The noun m. ὁ ἁγιασμός hagiasmōs means "sanctification" (Rom 6:19).³⁴

The verb ἁγιάζω hagiāzō means "to sanctify, to make holy, to consecrate" (Mt 6:9).³⁵

The adjective ἅγιος, ἴα, ον hāgios means "holy, saint" (Mt 6:9).³⁶

12.5.2 The Holy Trinity sanctifies.

Every person of the Trinity takes part in the sanctification of God's people. God the Father sanctifies God's people (Jn 17:17; 1 Thes 5:23). Jesus Christ sanctifies them, especially through his sacrifice and the shedding of his blood (Jn 17:19; Eph 5:26.27; Col 1:22; Heb 2:11; 9:13-14; 10:10.14.29; 10:19; 13:12). The Holy Spirit sanctifies God's people (2 Thes 2:13; 1 Pt 1:2).

32. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 19.

33. *ibid.*, p. 19-20.

34. *ibid.*, p. 17.

35. *ibid.*, p. 16-17.

36. *ibid.*, p. 17-19.

12.5.3 Holiness as a starting gift, an ongoing progress and the final target.

The different blessings of soteriology or salvation often have three aspects. In the beginning of conversion and the new birth there is already the gift of justification or holiness, for example. Then there should be a progress in the life of the Christian to become more holy or live more righteous. The ultimate target is to be like Christ in holiness or in righteousness, which means, of course, total perfection. All three stages are brought about by God's grace (Eph 2:5-10).

All who are born again are saints in Christ from the start.

In the New Testament being a saint is not a higher level in comparison to being a disciple or a Christian or a believer. To receive the Holy Spirit is to receive a sanctifying power (2 Thes 2:13; 1 Pt 1:2) and to become a saint. So Paul can write in 1 Cor 6:9-11 about the great change in the life of Christians there:

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Believers are already sanctified "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God", that is from the start of their Christian life when the name of Jesus is called out upon them and when they receive the Spirit. Therefore, when Christians are addressed in a letter or talked about in a book, they all are called saints (Acts 9:32.41; 26:10; Rom 1:7; 16:15; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:1-2; 14:33; 2 Cor 1:1; 13:13; Eph 1:1; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18; Phil 1:1; 4:21.22; Col 1:2.4.12; 1:26; 3:12; 2 Thes 1:10; Phlm 1:5.7; Heb 3:1; 6:10; 13:24; 1 Pt 3:5; Jude 1:3).

Believers are the holy temple of God (1 Cor 3:17). Gentile believers "are no longer strangers and aliens, but ... are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19). They have become part of "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pt 2:9). The prayers of the saints are collected like frankincense in bowls (Rv 5:8) and are pleasing to God. They have a great influence on earth when they are accepted and answered (8:3.4).

The beast of Rv 13 seems to overcome the saints and kills them and throws them into prison, but by their endurance and faith they will conquer the beast at last (Rv 13:7.10; 14:12; 15:2). God avenges the blood of his saints and servants (Rv 16:6; 17:6; 18:20.24; 19:2).

The saints will get their reward from God when the time has come (Rv 11:18). They share "in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years" (Rv 20:6). After the thousand years they have the victory over Satan and his armies (Rv 20:9).

All believers should strive to live a holy life reflecting God's holiness.

In spite of the fact that all true believers are already holy in Christ, they are challenged to live a life of increasing holiness or commitment to God: "... as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct" (1 Pt 1:15-16). The apostle Paul admonishes us in 2 Cor 7:1:

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.³⁷

The foundation for a holy life is to have Jesus Christ who is our sanctification (1 Cor 1:30). Or as it is put in Rom 6:11: "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." Having been crucified with Christ, died with him, buried with him, and raised from death in his resurrection, now believers should live for him alone: "But now that

37. καθαρίσωμεν ἑαυτοὺς ἀπὸ παντὸς μολυσμοῦ σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος, ἐπιτελοῦντες ἁγιωσύνην ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ.

you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life" (Rom 6:22).

The life "of holiness and godliness" (2 Pt 3:11) which we should lead implies presenting our "bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" (Rom 12:1). It also means to abstain from sexual immorality (1 Thes 4:3.4.7).

The ultimate target is to be holy as God is holy (1 Pt 1:15-16; Lv 19:2) in the sense of a perfect holiness where nothing unclean or sinful is to be seen (1 Thes 3:13). In this life and in this body of old mankind this seems to be impossible according to the Holy Scriptures. There was only one exception, Jesus Christ who always stayed without sin (Heb 4:15).

God "disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness" (Heb 12:10; 2 Pt 1:3-11). We have to strive "for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14). "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8). If we had to do this on our own, we would surely despair. But in the heavenly Jerusalem of Heb 12:22-23 we see "the spirits of the righteous made perfect". The passive voice in the phrase "made perfect" points to God's having done it (see also Acts 20:32; 26:18; Mt 27:52; Eph 1:4.18). The fine linen, bright and pure of the Bride of the Lamb, the holy city, the New Jerusalem, "is the righteous deeds of the saints" (Rv 19:8; 21:2.9-10; 22:19).

12.6 Perfection

12.6.1 Words used.

The noun m. ὁ τελειωτής *tēlēiōtēs* means "perfecter", "consummator" (Heb 12:2).³⁸

The noun f. ἡ τελειότης *tēlēiōtēs* means "completeness, perfection" (Col 3:14; Heb 6:1).³⁹

38. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 1603.

39. *ibid.*, p. 1602.

The verb τελειόω *tělēiōō* means "to complete, to fulfill, to finish, to make perfect" (Jn 19:28; 17:23).⁴⁰

The adjective τέλειος, α, ον *tělēiōs* means "complete, perfect" (Mt 5:48; 19:21).⁴¹

12.6.2 **Perfection through Jesus Christ.**

When it comes to the subject of our faith, then Jesus is "the founder and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2). So we should lead our life and run our course with the eyes set on him to cross the finish line.

When it comes to the subject of the unity of believers, then their perfect unity is based on a work of Christ: He has given them the glory he himself has received from the Father making all perfectly one (Jn 17:22-23).

The perfection of all ethical virtues and living is love (Col 3:14) creating a perfect harmony of all other Christian virtues. Believers are encouraged to put all these virtues on like pieces of clothes being part of the new mankind which is essentially Christ himself (Col 3:10-13).

12.6.3 **The standard is God's own being perfect.**

The key quote when it comes to perfection is from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:44-45.48):

44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust... 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.⁴²

40. *ibid.*, p. 1602-03.

41. *ibid.*, p. 1601-02.

42. Ὑποακούετε οὖν ὑμεῖς τέλειοι ὡς ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν.

Again love can be seen as the ultimate virtue of perfection, love even for the enemies. To love as God loves is the fulfillment of being perfect as God is perfect.

12.6.4 **Spiritual growth towards perfection.**

If somebody wants to start on a journey to perfection, he needs to follow Christ in a personal relationship of a disciple towards his master. If he loves anything more than Jesus Christ, he has to let it go (Mt 19:21). With the passing of time there should be a normal spiritual growth of believers towards maturity which is a growth towards perfection (Heb 5:12-6:1). According to God's plan with the church this is growth towards the maturity standard of Jesus Christ himself (Eph 4:11-16):

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,⁴³ 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

This plan of God that "we all" (!) should grow to the maturity of Christ himself is wonderful beyond anything. To attain this is not in any human power. The people with special gifts given to the church (Eph 4:11) and all saints have to work together to lead the body of Christ to this maturity and

43. μέχρι καταστήσωμεν οί πάντες εις την ενότητα της πίστεως και της επιγνώσεως του υιού του θεού, εις άνδρα τέλειον, εις μέτρον ήλικίας του πληρώματος του Χριστού

fullness of Christ. Having this great divine plan in mind Paul as an apostle was proclaiming Christ "warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Col 1:28). The Colossian Epaphras had a great burden of prayer for the other Colossian believers that they might "stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God" (Col 4:12). In order that we may be able to understand the perfect will of God more and more, we must present our bodies "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" and we must "be transformed by the renewal" of our mind (Rom 12:1-2). We should not "be children" in our thinking. We should be "infants in evil", but in our thinking we should be mature or perfect (1 Cor 14:20). Mature Christians should have the attitude of Paul in Phil 3:12-16.

This means that even those who may be considered by some to be very mature or (almost) "perfect", they are pressing towards Christ, running in a race with their eyes on Christ all the time. They forget themselves and what is behind and want to be more like Christ, want to be united with him in his sufferings and his glory (Phil 3:7-11). To belong to him is an ongoing miracle of his grace, to be more like him and close to him is the desire. Trials are necessary for growing towards this kind of maturity (Jas 1:2-4):

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

One area to check one's growth towards being "a perfect man" is the use of one's tongue (Jas 3:2). In this time we still live in an imperfect world being ourselves like children before the time of maturity. This has an impact even on the use of certain spiritual gifts in the church. But even in the perfect coming world there is one gift which is now and shall always be the greatest of all and that is love (1 Cor 13:8-13). That is also the reason for the fact that somebody who has been made perfect with regard to love, will have no fear even on judgment day (1 Jn 4:17-18).

There is a gathering going on in the heavenly Jerusalem, not only of myriads of angels but also of "the spirits of the righteous made perfect"

(Heb 12:23). What grace of "the founder and perfecter of our faith"! We are struggling here as imperfect people in an imperfect world. We are going through trials. Often we do not know how to handle the situations and challenges we are facing. But one day we shall join that crowd. It shall be marvelous. Either we join them up there, if we fall asleep in the Lord before he comes (Phil 1:23), or they will come down to us with the whole city (Rv 21:2.10). It will be glorious beyond anything!

12.7 **Glorification**

12.7.1 **Words used.**

The noun f. ἡ δόξα *dōxa* means 1. light, radiance of the light (1 Cor 15:40-41), 2. glory (Mt 6:29), 3. honor, fame (Rom 3:23; Jn 12:43).⁴⁴

The verb δοξάζω *dōxazō* means 1. to praise, to honor (Rom 15:6), 2. to glorify (Rom 8:30).⁴⁵

12.7.2 **The glory and glorification of God.**

God's glory.

Stephen "saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father (Rom 6:4).

There is a kind of glory which only belongs to God and should be given to him. He should be acknowledged as the one and true only God. If somebody is worshiped like a god and does not stop that and give the glory to God, he might even die in consequence of this sin like king Herod (Acts 12:23). The sin of idolatry is related to the same wrong attitude of giving glory to something that is not God as if it were God (Rom 1:23).

In Paul's wonderful praise of God in Eph 1:3-14 the three sections which reflect the work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in our lives close

44. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 403-5.

45. *ibid.*, p. 405.

with the same phrase that their work in us may result in something "to the praise of his glory" (Eph 1:6.12.14). This shows us that the glory of God is also part of the glorification of believers, because God wants to share his wealth with his beloved children (Eph 1:17-18). God has called us "to his eternal glory in Christ" (1 Pt 5:10), "to his own glory and excellence" (2 Pt 1:3). He "is able to keep" us "from stumbling and to present" us "blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy" (Jude 1:24). God wants "to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory" (Rom 9:23). That means the elect will have the whole of eternity to perceive and taste the "riches of God's glory".

One of the great losses of those who get lost will be that they "will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thes 1:9). Because only those who are pure in heart will have the privilege to see God with their own eyes (Mt 5:8).

When John saw that God brought salvation history to completion with the last seven plagues, "the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished" (Rv 15:8). The gospel is the gospel of the glory of the "happy" (blessed) God (1 Tm 1:11).

The glorification of God.

It is very often stated in the New Testament that the glory belongs and should be given to God for ever (e.g. Rom 11:36; 16:27). It is the highest privilege of believers to honor and glorify God by their life, their service and by their death (1 Cor 6:20; 10:31; 2 Cor 3:10; Jn 21:19).

Amongst the creatures man "is the image and glory of God" (1 Cor 11:7). Abraham is praised for the fact that he honored God's word with his faith giving glory to God (Rom 4:20). "According to the riches of his glory" God the Father can grant us "to be strengthened with power through his Spirit" in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith so that we may recognize him and give him praise in the church forever (Eph 3:16.21).

12.7.3 The glory and glorification of Christ.

The glory of Christ.

The glory of Jesus Christ is the divine glory of the only Son (Jn 1:14), full of grace and truth. Through his miraculous signs Jesus revealed his divine glory to his disciples (Jn 2:11). He is "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to ... Israel" (Luke 2:32).

When his public ministry in Israel came to a closure and he was about to be taken captive and to die at the cross, Jesus prayed (Jn 17:5.22-24):

5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed⁴⁶ ... 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.⁴⁷

A part of the glory of Christ which he had before the world existed, is the fact that the Father loved him before the foundation of the world. There were no heavens and no earth, no angels, no men, no animals, only the Holy Trinity and the inner-trinitarian love. Now the Son prays here before his suffering that we through his suffering may be enabled to see his glory. Again one person of the Trinity wants to share his glory with his beloved ones.

In his experience before Damascus Paul saw Jesus the Lord's divine glory and became blind (Acts 22:11) and had to be healed from this later.

46. καὶ νῦν δόξασόν με σύ, πάτερ, παρὰ σεαυτῷ τῇ δόξει ἣ εἶχον πρὸ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον εἶναι παρὰ σοί.

47. πάτερ, ὃ δέδωκάς μοι, θέλω ἵνα ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ κάκεινοι ὧσιν μετ' ἐμοῦ, ἵνα θεωρῶσιν τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἐμὴν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι, ὅτι ἠγάπησάς με πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.

From that time onward Paul preached that Jesus is the Lord meaning that he is God and that all will have to acknowledge this to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:11; 1 Tm 3:16; Titus 2:13; cf. also Heb 1:3).

Peter, the eyewitness of the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain, speaks of God the Father who out of his great glory was giving glory to his Son (2 Pt 1:17). The second coming of Christ will be a coming in divine glory (Mt 16:27; 24:30; 25:31).

The glorification of Christ.

One way of the glorification of Christ in the New Testament is his way through the suffering of the cross and his resurrection to go to his glory in heaven to sit there at the right hand of God and rule the cosmos from there. The use of the word "to glorify" (dōxazō) for this is especially pointed in the gospel of John (Jn 7:39; 12:16.23; 13:31.32; 17:1.5).

But the same idea of Christ's going through his sufferings into his glory is found in other places within the New Testament as well (Luke 24:26; Heb 2:7.9.10; 1 Pt 1:11.21). Christ's way of glorifying God the Father by loving the Father's commandment more than his own life and by loving his lost sheep more than himself, gives an example for his disciples also to practice the ultimate love for each other and so to glorify the Father and the Son (Jn 15:8.12-14; 17:10). We will see that the glorification of believers follows the example of the glorification of the Son. They also go through sufferings to glory.

12.7.4 The glory of man in this world.

Solomon can be seen as an example of a gloriously rich man in this world (Luke 12:27). But even for him it would be true what Peter says about the glory of man quoting Isaiah:

22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24 for "All flesh is like grass and all

its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord remains forever."

The best way for a perishable man is to invest into that which remains forever. To accept the word of God, to be born again and to never cease loving one another from a pure heart. We should not strive to become the richest in a worldly sense, but to love and never cease loving. That is part of the glorification of the believers.

12.7.5 The glorification of believers.

The glory of living with Christ now.

To have Christ is to have the hope of glory (Col 1:27) and to have a "hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory" (1 Cor 2:7), it is to have "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:8). According to Rom 8:30 all believers are already glorified. This is invisible. They are not yet revealed as the children of God to all (Rom 8:18). While all sinners are lacking the acknowledgement by God (Rom 3:23), justified believers can "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom 5:1-2). There is a possible glorification going on within the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:26). Believers may experience a "joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory" (1 Pt 1:8).

It is a privilege and glorious to serve Christ now with the gifts of the Spirit (2 Cor 3:7-18) because God reveals his glory in the face of Jesus Christ through the sacrificial service of his servants (2 Cor 4:4-17).

Through sufferings to glory.

When the apostles James and John asked for the best places to sit near to Jesus in his glory (Mark 10:37), Jesus gave them this advice for their career:

43 ... But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

The children of God are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided" they "suffer with him in order that" they "may also be glorified with him" (Rom 8:18; 1 Pt 4:13.14).

The future glorification of believers.

When Christ comes the children of God will be revealed in great glory (Rom 8:18; Col 3:4; 2 Thes 2:14; Rom 2:7.10; 1 Cor 15:43; 2 Tm 2:10; 1 Pt 1:7; 5:4). The day of their revelation will even have an impact on creation (Rom 8:21). The resurrection body will be glorious (Phil 3:21). The glory of Moses and Elijah Luke 9:31 gives us an impression of possibilities of glory for believers. The twelve apostles will sit on thrones (Mt 19:28; 1 Pt 5:1). The New Jerusalem is as the living place for believers a city of great glory (Rv 21:11.23).

Chapter 13

The Holy Spirit Is God

13.1 The Holy Spirit Is God in the Old Testament.

13.1.1 The Word Used for Spirit

The word for Spirit in Hebrew רוּחַ¹ (rûaḥ)² also means wind, storm, compass point (as in the direction of the wind, east or west etc.), breath, and can also describe the condition of a person. When the word rûaḥ is used together with God or the Lord, it is not always translated as "Spirit" but sometimes as "wind" or "storm". The context must help to decide. What unites the "wind" or "spirit" motive is that all is invisible:³ You can see neither of them, only their effects on the visible world. That may be one reason why the "Spirit" of God or the Lord is used so often: It is a way of seeing God's invisible hand reaching out from the invisible world into ours.

1. The Hebrew text given in the two chapters about the Holy Spirit is taken from the Institute, Westminster Leningrad Codex.

2. The transliteration from Hebrew to English is according to Thomas O. Lambdin and Heinrich von Siebenthal, *Lehrbuch Bibel-Hebräisch*, Third (Giessen: Brunnen, 1999) p. XXIII-XXVI. See also the appendix: The Hebrew Alphabet.

3. See Willem A. Vangemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 3 (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1997) p. 1073, article רוּחַ.

13.1.2 The Qualities of God's Spirit

He is God.

Is 30:1:

“Ah, stubborn children,” declares the LORD,
 “who carry out a plan, but not mine,
 and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit,
 that they may add sin to sin.”

Here the expression “but not mine” is used as a parallel and synonym to “but not of my Spirit”. God is speaking. To consult God or to consult his Spirit is one and the same. The Spirit of God is God himself (cf. Is 31:3; John 4:24; Is 40:13).

He is omnipresent.

He is everywhere at the same time. Psalm 139:7-10:

7 Where shall I go from your Spirit?
 Or where shall I flee from your presence?
 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
 If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
 9 If I take the wings of the morning
 and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
 10 even there your hand shall lead me,
 and your right hand shall hold me.

The Spirit of God and his "presence" are used synonymously. God's Spirit and his presence are everywhere.

He is holy.

Psalm 51:11:

Cast me not away from your presence,
 and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

See also Is 63:10-13.

He is good.

Psalm 143:10:

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God!
Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!

See also Nehemiah 9:19-21.

He is a person.

As a person God's Spirit has the ability to think, to will and to feel.

He is omniscient. He knows everything. This includes the ability to think. Is 40:13 read in the context of Isaiah 40:12-31 leads to the conclusion that God's Spirit knows everything and has no need to be told anything.

Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD,
or what man shows him his counsel?

See also Psalm 139:7 in the context of 139:1-7. The Lord knows David's every idea and word (verses 1-6) because his spirit is everywhere (verse 7).

He has a will. He sends people for a special task and gives them the gifts they need for that task (see below in subsection 14.1.2). This implies a will, a plan and the ability to think. Isaiah 48:16:

And now the Lord GOD has sent me, and his Spirit.

He has emotions. Isaiah 63:10:

10 But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit;
therefore he turned to be their enemy,
and himself fought against them.

He is related to the presence of God.

Ezekiel sees the Glory of God coming like a stormy wind or whirlwind (rûaḥ sə'ārāh) in Ez 1:4. Four Cherubs are also part of the throne presence of God. The throne is on wheels and their spirit is in the wheels (1:20; 1:21; 10:17). We can assume that the "stormy wind" represents the Spirit of God who is guiding the spirit of the living creatures to where the throne of God has to go (1:12).

He is related to the word of God.

In Proverbs 1:23 personified wisdom invites sinners to turn and receive her spirit and words:

If you turn at my reproof,
behold, I will pour out my spirit to you;
I will make my words known to you.

The spirit and the words are used in a parallelism and are related to each other. See also Isaiah 34:16. The mouth of the Lord and his Spirit move in the same direction: What the Lord has decreed, the Spirit of the Lord brings to pass.

He is likened to ...

Wind or storm Psalm 147:18:

He sends out his word, and melts them;
he makes his wind [rûḥô] blow and the waters flow.

See also Isaiah 40:6-8.

Something Fluid, often like Life Giving Water Isaiah 44:3-4

3 For I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring,
and my blessing on your descendants.

4 They shall spring up among the grass
like willows by flowing streams.

See also Proverbs 1:23; Isaiah 32:15; Joel 2:28-29; Ezekiel 39:29; Zechariah 12:10.

The Oil of Anointment 1 Sm 16:13:

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

Samuel anoints David with oil to be king of Israel. At the same time God "anoints" David with the Holy Spirit so that "the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward".

13.1.3 Divine Works of God's Spirit

The role of God's Spirit in creation and in sustaining creation

He had a role in the creation of the world. Gen 1:1-3:

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

The hovering of God's Spirit over the face of the waters seems to have been part of the preparation for the creation of light in the next verse and of the other things to follow.

... in the creation of the heavens. Job 26:13:

By his wind [or "By his breath"; *bərûḥô*] the heavens were
made fair;
his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.

See also Psalm 33:6. Here we see again the relationship between the spirit or breath of God on the one hand and the word of God on the other: Every human being speaks his words through "the breath of his mouth". That is the way we speak and make sounds. This anthropomorphism is used for God: He has a mouth and he has the breath of his mouth (or spirit of his mouth). So he speaks and so he creates everything. This same idea might be the background for Job 26:13: God created through his spoken word the heavens (see Genesis 1:6).

... in the creation of the living creatures. Ps 104:27-31:

27 These all look to you,
to give them their food in due season.
28 When you give it to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.
29 When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.
30 When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.
31 May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD rejoice in his works.

When God sends forth his Spirit, living creatures are created. All that lives depends on the life-giving power of God's Spirit. Therefore the worshiper desires that God may enjoy the beauty of his creation.

... and especially in the creation of mankind creating men and sustaining their life. Genesis 6:3:

Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years."

Somehow the work of God's Spirit here is related to the lifespan of human beings. Therefore we can say that the Spirit of God sustains the life of human beings. The same is taught in other verses (Job 27:1-4; Genesis

2:7). According to these passages human breath [nəšāmāh] has its origin from God's breathing life into him. Man is created by God's breathing into him and his breath and life is sustained by the work of God's breath or Spirit.

According to Job 32:6-10 Elihu has not only his human life because God breathed it into him, but also insight and understanding. Elihu seems to say, that his own spirit has understanding and wisdom because his spirit originated from God, from God's breathing into him.

See also Job 32:18; 33:3-434:12-15 Psalm 104:30; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Isaiah 42:5

The role of God's Spirit in judgment and salvation.

During the first exodus At the Reed Sea Ex 15:8:

At the blast of your nostrils [ûḇə-rûaḥ 'appêkâ] the waters
piled up;
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.

The punishment of the Pharaoh and his elite forces was the salvation of the people of God. Often judgment and salvation are two sides of the same coin in the Holy Scriptures. The words "at the blast of your nostrils" see the "rûaḥ" of God's nose / face as the instrument of the destruction of the enemies: The word for "your nostrils" ['appêkâ, the organ of breathing] can also mean "your nose", "your face", or "your anger". Perhaps the idea is that God got so angry with the stubbornness of the Pharaoh and the Egyptians that the breath of his angry face/nose was enough to arouse a storm which saved the Israelites on the one hand and destroyed the Egyptians on the other. This is of course an anthropomorphism. The sins of the Egyptians have kindled this wrath of God. Normally God is "long suffering" or "slow to anger" ['erek 'appayim; literally 'erek means "long" to anger]: It takes a great deal to really make God angry to the point where "his nostrils shake with anger." But the Egyptians had done exactly that. Then God's wrath in the form of "rûaḥ 'appêkâ" took them away. Ex 15:10 repeats the idea of God's breath / wind destroying them. See also Isaiah 63:12-14.

... during the second and messianic exodus Isaiah 11:15:

And the LORD will utterly destroy
the tongue of the Sea of Egypt,
and will wave his hand over the River
with his scorching breath,
and strike it into seven channels,
and he will lead people across in sandals.

The whole context within Isaiah 11 speaks of a second exodus (see Is 11:11).

... in saving David 2 Sam 22:16:

Then the channels of the sea were seen;
the foundations of the world were laid bare,
at the rebuke of the LORD,
at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.

Compare Psalm 18:15. The idea seems to be from Exodus again: God got so angry by the stubborn sins of Saul and the other enemies of David, God's anointed one, that the breath of his nostrils became a storm by which God was saving David. It is quite interesting that David seems to have seen his own personal life experience as parallel to the exodus salvation of Israel (see 2 Sam 22:16 and Ps 18:15 together with the context 2 Sam 22:1ff and Ps 18:1ff).

... in judging the wicked Eliphaz the Temanite states about the wicked in Job 4:9:

By the breath of God they perish,
and by the blast of his anger they are consumed.

The wicked make God so angry that he destroys them in his wrath. God's anger here again is like a scorching, destructive wind going forth from his face. So the face is turned towards the wicked who, as his enemies, cannot survive this power encounter. See also Job 15:30.

... in the judgment and salvation of God's People In Is 4:3-4 Isaiah presents the idea that God's Spirit will be part of the coming age of salvation:

3 And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem
will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life
in Jerusalem,
4 when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion
and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst
by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning.

God will work through his Spirit which is called here "a spirit of judgment" and "a spirit of burning" [bə-rûaḥ mišpāt ū-bə-rûaḥ bā'ēr]. The context within the book of Isaiah helps us to identify this. We read in Isaiah 28:5-6:

5 In that day the LORD of hosts will be a crown of glory,
and a diadem of beauty, to the remnant of his people,
6 and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment,
and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

Here it is expressively stated that the Lord is the "spirit of justice" [rûaḥ mišpāt] which is the same expression as in Is 4:4 and helps us to understand both passages as speaking of God's Spirit. God's Spirit is a gift for the Messiah for wise judgement in Isaiah 11:1ff and for the messianic Servant of the Lord in 42:1ff. The one who sits in judgment in 28:6 might be messianic as well; compare the messianic interpretation of the stone passage in Is 28:16-17 to that in the New Testament (1 Pt 2:6; Eph 2:20).

Compare this idea of cleansing through the Spirit to John the Baptist's message about the Messiah who will baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16). We know from John 1:23 that the Baptist understood his whole ministry in relation to the book of Isaiah (see also Is 30:27-28; 40:3-8; 51:6-8; 42:1.4; 59:18-21; Hosea 13:15-16; Zechariah 4:6-7; 6:8).

John the Baptist has seen his preaching as the fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3ff (see John 1:23), as have all the Gospels (In addition to John:

Mark 1:2-3; Matthew 3:3; Luke 3:4-6).

13.2 The Holy Spirit is God in the New Testament.

13.2.1 The Word Used for Spirit

The word used for spirit in the New Testament πνεῦμα (pněuma)⁴ means also wind, storm, breath and can speak of the condition of a person. This is very similar to the use of rūaḥ in the Old Testament. Besides being used for the human spirit it can point to angels as spiritual beings or is used for unclean spirits denoting demons. Very often it is used for God's Spirit⁵.

13.2.2 The Qualities of the Holy Spirit

He is God.

He is one person of the Holy Trinity. In the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) Jesus Christ orders his disciples:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (baptizōntēs autōus ēis tō ōnōma tōu patrōs kai tōu yiōu kai tōu hagiōu pněumatōs)⁶, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

4. For the Greek alphabet see Ernst G. Hoffmann and Heinrich von Siebenthal, *Griechische Grammatik zum Neuen Testament* (Riehen / Schweiz: Immanuel-Verlag, 1985) p. 9. Our transliteration is given in the appendix "The Greek Alphabet" in the middle column.

5. See Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* p. 1338.

6. πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. The Greek Text of the New Testament here and afterwards is quoted according to Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition*, [accessed May 19, 2011], 2010, <http://www.crosswire.org/sword/modules/ModInfo.jsp?modName=SBLGNT>.

The teaching of the New Testament about the "Father" is clear. He is God. There is also an emphasis on Jesus Christ as God and Man in one person. His divinity is clearly taught or implied in many statements. If Jesus Christ himself combines the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit with one "name" in which one name all believers everywhere should be baptized, he teaches that the Father is divine, the Son is divine and the Holy Spirit is divine. The name of the triune God is pronounced over everyone who is baptized signifying that he is now God's own and belongs to God's people.

God is spirit. In his talk with the Samaritan woman Jesus answers her question about worshiping God (John 4:24):

God is spirit (pněuma hō thěōs), and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth (ēn pněumati kai alēthēia)."

In this talk Jesus offers her the gift of the "living water" (John 4:10) meaning the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39) becoming "a well of water springing up to eternal life" in every believer.

While Jesus emphasizes that "salvation is from the Jews", he points to a great change that is about to take place and will bring a worship more excellent than the one in Jerusalem. He points to a new era when worshipers do not worship God "place-oriented" in the body, but "God-centered," in the Holy Spirit, and in truth; in spiritual reality, having been born again (John 3:3-5) and changed and connected with God (John 1:12) by the Spirit.

We have a very similar line in 2 Corinthians 3. While in John 4 there is an emphasis on the superiority of the time of the worship "in spirit and in truth", in 2 Cor 3 we have praise of the superiority of serving the Lord in the power of the Spirit with God's law being written on the tablets of the human heart (3:3-6). This is in comparison to Moses' service of God where God's law was written only on tablets of stone, not changing the human nature but condemning the sinner to death (3:6-11).

Paul continues his comparison in 2 Cor 3:12-18 and states that the Christian believers do not have to put a veil on their face while meeting God (17-18):

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (hō dē kyriōs tō pněuma ěstin. hōu dē

tõ pněuma kyriõu, ěľěuthěria.). 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

He is sent by Jesus and goes out from the Father. This is what Jesus taught the disciples on the night before his death (John 15:26-27)

26 But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father (hõn ěgõ pěmpsõ hymin para tõu patrõs), the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father (hõ para tõu patrõs ěkpõrěuětai), he will bear witness about me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

The teaching of Paul follows the same direction: When someone receives Christ, God sends the Spirit of His Son into his heart (Gal 4:4-7). The result is that the believer receives the Holy Spirit through the Father and the Son. In 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 Paul teaches that God gives his Holy Spirit to us to make us holy (see also Hebrews 2:4).

He is also called "Christ's Spirit" (Rom 8:9), "Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7) or "Spirit of God's Son" (Gal 4:6). According to Rom 8:9-11 every person truly belonging to Christ has the Spirit of Christ or God's Spirit:

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

See also Acts 1:8; 16:6-10.

He is omnipresent.

In Revelation 5:6 Jesus Christ is pictured as the lamb with seven horns and seven eyes:

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

A horn is a metaphor for strength. The seven horns of Christ as the lamb of God (compare John 1:29) show his perfect strength. Because here in Revelation 5 Jesus is worthy to be worshiped by all creatures he is shown to be God. Therefore his perfect strength is his being God Almighty. His seven eyes pointing to "the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" speak of his special relationship with the Spirit of God. Seven is again the number of perfection and fullness. Revelation calls the one Spirit of God the Seven Spirits of God because of the idea of fullness, because of the lampstand in the Tabernacle, and because of Isaiah 11:1-2.⁷

The fact that those who receive the Spirit by faith in Christ the "lamb" (see John 1:29-34) become kings and priests themselves (Rev 5:9-10) is awesome. We have to remember that the lamb is king (the lion of Judah Rev 5:5) and priest (the lamb Rev 5:6; Isaiah 53:7-10).

He is omniscient.

Rev 5:6 includes the idea of the omniscience of the Spirit of God: The "seven eyes" being everywhere see everything and know everything. Because the Spirit of God has full access to God's inmost being and his every thought, he is omniscient meaning he knows everything because God knows everything (1 Cor 2:10-11):

... 10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

7. In Isaiah 11:1-2 the Spirit of God rests on the Messiah with a sevenfold qualification.

He is holy.

God's Spirit is quite often⁸ called "holy" in the New Testament.

See for example John 14:26:

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit (tõ pněuma tõ hagiõn), whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Being the Holy Spirit he has a sanctifying power and everyone receiving him is obliged to lead a holy life having become part of the temple of God.

In Romans 1:3-4 Paul speaks of the son of God

... who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The "Spirit of holiness" points to the Holy Spirit as giving holiness. Whoever receives the Holy Spirit becomes a holy person (Rom 8:27), set aside for the purpose and plan God has for him. Here it is Jesus of Nazareth who is proven to be the son of God, the Messiah, not only by his descent from David but by his powerful resurrection from the dead, by the intervention of the "Spirit of Holiness" declaring him in this act not only not guilty after his shameful crucifixion, but to be the most holy anointed one of God, the Saviour of all nations (Rom 1:5; 1:16-17).

Paul thanks God for the Thessalonians (2 Thes 2:13) that their election to salvation goes hand in hand with the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and the faith of the believers (see also 1 Peter 1:1-2).

8. Here are 89 verses with the phrase: Matthew 1:18; 1:20; 3:11; 12:32; 28:19; Mark 1:8; 3:29; 12:36; 13:11; Luke 1:15; 1:35; 1:41; 1:67; 2:25; 2:26; 3:16; 3:22; 4:1; 10:21; 11:13; 12:10; 12:12; John 1:33; 14:26; 20:22; Acts 1:2; 1:5; 1:8; 1:16; 2:4; 2:33; 2:38; 4:8; 4:25; 4:31; 5:3; 5:32; 6:5; 7:51; 7:55; 8:15; 8:17; 8:19; 9:17; 9:31; 10:38; 10:44; 10:45; 10:47; 11:15; 11:16; 11:24; 13:2; 13:4; 13:9; 13:52; 15:8; 15:28; 16:6; 19:2; 19:6; 20:23; 20:28; 21:11; 28:25; Romans 5:5; 9:1; 14:17; 15:13; 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 12:3; 2 Corinthians 6:6; 13:14; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1:6; 4:8; 2 Timothy 1:14; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8; 10:15; 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:21; Jude 1:20.

He is the spirit of truth.

This is an emphasis we get especially from John. In John 14:15-18 Jesus says:

15 If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας), whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

The "Spirit of truth" is Christ related (John 14:6). The Spirit of truth promotes Christ as the truth and gives understanding of Christ's glory and great importance. Christ does not leave the disciples as orphans, because he comes to them in the form of the Spirit of truth (see also John 15:26-27; 16:12-15; 1 John 5:5-8).

We may assume that John's use of the phrase, "the Spirit of truth", is also influenced by the Old Testament Hebrew where truth and faithfulness belong together. God's truth implies his faithfulness: whatever he promises will be fulfilled.

The Spirit himself is truth, and he testifies to the fact that Jesus is the "Son of God". This is the target of the testimony of the Holy Spirit. If we combine this with the idea of the faithfulness of God, it means that Jesus has come as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures (John 17:17; 1:23; 1:29-34; 1:45; 5:46-47; 19:24-30; 19:36-37; 20:9) to save the world (John 1:29; 1 John 2:2; 5:11-13).

He has emotions.

The apostle Paul sees the Holy Spirit as of greatest importance and consequence for the believer. Therefore He admonishes the Christians to lead such a life that we do not make the Holy Spirit sad (Ephesians 4:29-30):

29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that

it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

In this context, sins of the mouth seem to be grieving the Holy Spirit (see Eph 4:29 and 31).

He is a comforter and helper.

In his farewell speech in John (14:15-17) Jesus encourages the disciples with the idea that someone who is an equal to Christ will come and help them:

15 If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper (allōn paraklēton), to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

The idea that the Father will give them "another Helper" (allōn paraklēton) seems to imply that Jesus who is about to go to the father is also a "Helper" (paraklētos; compare 1 John 2:1-2⁹). The Holy Spirit is "another" (allōs paraklētos) of the same quality. When Jesus leaves them, they do not loose, but in the light of John 16:5-7 they will win:

5 But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' 6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

9. 1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate (paraklēton) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

The astonishing words of Jesus in John 14:12 must also be understood in the context of the coming of the Spirit after Jesus has left:

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

So it is clear that the disciples gain by the going of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit. And in a way they do not lose Jesus but remain in contact with him (John 15:1-17) in the person of the Spirit. It is the set purpose of the Spirit to grant the believers the presence of Jesus and his truth all the time (John 14:25-28; see also 14:3.18; 15:25-27; Acts 9:31; Phil 1:12-20; Acts 7:55-60; and Mt 10:19-20).

He sends people for a special task and gives them the gifts they need for that. This implies a will and a plan and the ability to think.

One of the earliest and greatest moves in mission history was triggered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-4):

1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. 4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

The phrase "being sent out by the Holy Spirit" (ἐκπέμψθηntēs hypō tōu agiōu pnēmatōs) seems to summarize what had happened in 13:2-3: They were sent out by the Holy Spirit, but this happened within and through the spiritual leadership of the church of Antioch. Perhaps the speaking of the Holy Spirit took the form of a prophetic utterance by one of the present prophets mentioned in 13:1. Be that as it may, one thing seems clear: That

all major developments in mission history in Acts happen under the special guidance and work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2; 8; 10-11; 13; 15; 16).

In his first report (the Gospel) Luke had "dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). By implication we might understand that Luke's second report (Acts) is "about all that Jesus continued to do and teach", especially through the work of his "Spirit" or the "Holy Spirit" (compare Acts 16:6-7). This is what makes the Gospel movement so powerful in Acts and in fact unstoppable.

This is another area where Paul and Luke agree. Speaking of various gifts and ministries Paul states (1 Cor 12:11):

All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who ap-
portions to each one individually as he wills.

Different passages we have read imply that the Holy Spirit has a will, is rational and has emotions. In other words we can say that according to these passages the Holy Spirit has a personality of his own.

He is related to the presence of God.

Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the Church of Christ and the believers have become a temple (1 Cor 3:16-17):

16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that
God's Spirit dwells in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's tem-
ple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you
are that temple.

The warning against not destroying the temple of God is given here in the context of 1 Cor 1-4 "that there be no divisions among you" (1 Cor 1:10). In 1 Cor 6:15-19 this idea is repeated to warn the Corinthians not to go to a prostitute and not to commit immorality.

Paul writes to the Ephesians (2:19-22) as Gentiles and puts an emphasis on the unity of the one body of Christ with Jews and Gentiles being built together to be one temple in the Holy Spirit (see also 2 Tim 1:14; James 4:4-6

The sevenfold Spirit in Revelation (Rev 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6) reminds us of the one lampstand with seven arms in the Old Testament sanctuary, picturing the one spirit with manifold effects.

The lampstand of the tabernacle in Exodus 25:31.37 helps the priests to see in the presence of God, in the holy room on this side of the curtain, which covers the most holy place wherein is the ark of the covenant. The spiritual meaning we can learn here is that the natural light is not good enough to recognize God and divine things (1 Cor 2:14).¹⁰ We need the light God gives us to contemplate his glory.

He is related to the word of God.

In John 6:51-52.59-63) Jesus states after the feeding of the five thousand:

51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh ... 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life¹¹.

For our subject it is very important to notice that we gain the Spirit of God by accepting the words of Christ.

That the Spirit works through the word is also taught in Epesians 6:17:

... and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God¹²...

When we ask what kind of word of God is imagined here, I think, the word that has become Scripture fits best. In the realm of spiritual warfare it must be a weapon the believer can grasp and use, like Jesus Christ did when

10. When God reveals himself in the Old Testament there is sometimes some kind of accompanying "darkness" mentioned (Ps 97:2; Ex 20:21; Dt 4:11; 5:23; 2 Sam 22:10; Psalm 18:9; 1 Kings 8:12; 2 Chr 6:1).

11. τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ ζωοποιον, ἡ σὰρξ οὐκ ὠφελεῖ οὐδέν• τὰ ῥήματα ἃ ἐγὼ λελάληκα ὑμῖν πνεῦμά ἐστιν καὶ ζωὴ ἐστιν.

12. καὶ τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου δέξασθε, καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος, ὃ ἐστιν ῥῆμα θεοῦ,

he was attacked and tempted by Satan. Just three consecutive chapters of the Old Testament (Dt 6-8) proved enough to have victory over the devil (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13).

This should teach us a double lesson: Firstly we also must know the word of God in order to have the victory. Secondly we should not be surprised that Satan will try to discredit the word of God, that is to beat the sword of the Spirit out of our hands (compare Genesis 3:1-5).

A comparison of Ephesians 5:18-21 with Colossians 3:16-18 clearly shows that being full of the Spirit in Eph 5:18 resembles the Word of Christ dwelling richly in someone in Col 3:16.

He is likened to ...

Wind or Storm The famous section in John 3:3-8 about the spiritual new birth is only fully understandable with the fact in mind that "pnēuma" in Greek means both "spirit" and "wind"¹³:

7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind (pnēuma) blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit (ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος).¹⁴

Therefore it is not surprising that the Spirit came like a storm when he finally was poured out in Acts 2:1-4.

Something Fluid, like Water

13. This is especially important for understanding the link between John 3:8 and the verses before. As we have seen above (subsection 13.1.1), the same is true for the Hebrew word *rûaḥ*, which also means both "spirit" and "wind".

14. τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θέλει πνεῖ, καὶ τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις, ἀλλ' οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ῥέχεται καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει· οὕτως ἐστὶν πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος.

He is likened to purifying water in the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Every Gospel has one reference to the baptism in the Spirit. It is John the Baptist who introduces this term at a crucial point of his career. He talks of his baptism with water and himself, in contrast to the much stronger one [Jesus], who is about to come and baptize with the Spirit of God, with a much superior baptism (Matthew 3:11-12):

11 “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire¹⁵. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

See also Mark 1:7-8 and Luke (3:15-17). So thanks to Luke we know why John the Baptist coined this phrase: Israel was about to make a great mistake regarding the person of John the Baptist, being impressed by his movement of water baptism. They had begun to think that he might be the Messiah. John was determined to erase this error from the start. For him it was unthinkable to mix up the Messiah and his own person. His baptism is only one of water, a sign of repentance, but not changing the heart from within. This would be done by the stronger one, who will be able to baptize with God's Spirit. This would be a powerful baptism changing and purifying the human heart from within like with fire.

Everyone who comes to John in repentance will receive the baptism in water as a sign that he is prepared to welcome the kingdom of God and the king of this kingdom, the Messiah. Likewise everyone coming to Jesus if he accepts him as Messiah, will receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The task of John is to baptize with water. The task of Jesus is to baptize with the Holy Spirit. We can trust that both fulfill their purpose. If we come to John repenting, he will baptize us with water. If we come to Christ believing, he will baptize us with the Holy Spirit. He will reject no one (John 6:37).

15. Ἐγὼ μὲν ὑμᾶς βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι εἰς μετάνοιαν• ὁ δὲ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἰσχυρότερός μου ἐστίν, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς τὰ ὑποδήματα βαστάσαι• αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί•

The apostle John gives us in his gospel the witness of John the Baptist about his own service and about Jesus (John 1:24-34): The verses in John 1:26-27 and 33 taken together correspond to Mt 3:11-12, Mk 1:7-8, and Lk 3:16-17.

In all 4 verses in the Gospels (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16 and John 1:33) two baptisms are compared (in water and in Spirit) and two persons (John and Jesus). That is the key to understanding this phrase.

In Matthew 11:9-14 Jesus gives this testimony about John:

9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is he of whom it is written, “‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’ 11 Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, 14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

The essence of what Jesus is telling us here, is that John and Jesus represent two times. The time of the old and the new covenant; the time of preparation and the time of fulfillment; the time of the waiting for the kingdom of God and the time of the arrived kingdom. In a way John belongs to the New Testament, the new covenant as well, being a link between the old and the new. This is what makes him so great. There is no greater prophet than him.

Moses and Elijah might be his equal, but they are not greater. Within the New Testament his role is the role of preparing the way for the Lord. But he is not the Lord. He is the friend of the bridegroom, but not the bridegroom (John 3:29). As the last one in the long line of prophets who have prepared the way for the Messiah, John the Baptist stands up and stands out; not as a weakling amongst the prophets, but as the one in comparison to whom no other can claim to be superior. In him the power of the Old Testament

prophecy stands up in full force, pointing to Jesus Christ, exclaiming (John 1:29.33):

Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ... this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

We should also note what Jesus has testified (Matthew 11:11):

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

According to John 3:3-5 it is necessary to be born again to become a citizen of the kingdom of God. Everyone who is born again by the Spirit of God, even the smallest Christian in a church service, has tasted a greater grace than anyone under the Old Covenant (see 1 Peter 1:10-12).

More than one hundred years ago people began using the term "baptism in the Holy Spirit" to make a distinction between weaker and stronger Christians, and not between people still under the Old Covenant and people under the New Covenant. The thinking is that some Christians have received this baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire, and others have not. They understand that some Christians have "only" been born again, but they have not received the baptism in the Holy Spirit yet. They say that those with the baptism of the Holy Spirit lead a more powerful and victorious life and are more spiritual than those who have only received Jesus Christ as their Saviour, but have not been baptized in the Spirit.

This understanding is not according to Scripture as we will see. The term "to baptize in the (Holy) Spirit" is not used to make a distinction between weaker and stronger Christians in the New Testament. A look at all seven contexts will show this (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 1 Cor 12:13).

We have already had a look at the four texts in the Gospels. There John uses this term to make a distinction between himself and Jesus, between his followers and the future followers of Jesus. His disciples are only baptized in water; the disciples of Christ will be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The two verses in Acts give the same idea of comparison between the baptism of John on the one hand and the baptism in the Spirit on the other.

In Acts 1:4-5 Jesus tells the disciples what will happen on Pentecost in Acts 2:

4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

When this prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled, the Holy Spirit was given to all (Acts 2:3-4). There was no distinction related to this phrase between weaker and stronger Christians. The same is true for Acts 11:16. There this phrase is used to put an emphasis on the unity of all believers, those from the Jews on the one hand, and those from the Gentiles on the other.

In Acts 10:43-44 Peter had seen how the Holy Spirit fell on all Gentiles in the house of Cornelius who heard and believed the Good News that Jesus Christ died for all nations to forgive their sins. Afterwards Peter had been strongly criticized for eating with uncircumcised Gentiles. To defend himself Peter only had to tell what God had done to bring this about. And then Peter says looking back on Acts 10 (see Acts 11:15-17):

15 As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’¹⁶ 17 If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?”

Peters account had a powerful impact (Acts 11:18):

When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”

16. ἐμνήσθην δὲ τοῦ ῥήματος τοῦ κυρίου ὡς ἔλεγεν• Ἰωάννης μὲν ἐβάπτισεν ὕδατι, ὑμεῖς δὲ βαπτισθήσεσθε ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.

Here again the phrase "the baptism in the Holy Spirit" is not used to distinguish between weaker and stronger Christians but to emphasize the spiritual unity of all, be they Jews or Gentiles. They all have one spiritual experience and are united by having received the same Holy Spirit.

The last section has an even stronger emphasis on unity (1 Cor 12:11-14):

11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. 12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit.¹⁷ 14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

The Holy Spirit gives every believer at least one gift. Using this gift he works as a member of the body of Christ which is made up of many different Christians exercising many different spiritual gifts. But all are one in Christ, one body. The way to become part of the body of Christ is to be baptized in the Spirit [ἐν ἡνί πνεύματι ... ἐβαπτισθῆμεν]. Without this baptism in God's Spirit you can not belong to the body of Christ.

Therefore the baptism in the Spirit belongs to the start of the Christian life. It is not a later experience or a "second blessing". It is a first blessing. All believers in Corinth had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, but at the same time Paul can say that most of them are still at the start of their spiritual development (1 Cor 3:1-4):

1 But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of

17. καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες, εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεύμα ἐποτίσθημεν.

the flesh and behaving only in a human way? 4 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?

Paul sees most of the believers in Corinth as "babies" in Christ, still in need of milk and not being able to digest solid food. It is clear that for Paul the baptism in the Spirit is not the start of a higher and more powerful and fruitful spiritual life. It is simply like being born again; the very start of the spiritual life.

It is strange that an expression Paul has used to put an emphasis on the unity of all believers has been used in a different sense causing many splits and divisions in the Church. This should teach us the lesson that we should try to use the biblical words in their biblical sense, understood within the biblical context.

He is likened to something fluid in the phrases of being full of the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament there are only two writers who speak of being filled with the Holy Spirit: Paul, once, in Ephesians 5:18. All the rest of the passages are from Luke.

Only a few people are said to be full of the Holy Spirit "plērēs pnēumatōs hagiōu"¹⁸ using it as an adjective: Jesus, the seven deacons of Acts 6 including Stephen, and Barnabas (Luke 4:1-2); Acts 6:3-6; 7:55-56; 11:19-24).

While the adjectival phrase, "full of the Holy Spirit", seems to point to a continuous state of fullness, the different verbal constructions have differing significance.¹⁹

18. πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου

19. Luke 1:15 fut. pass. from πίμπλημι fill Zerwick and Grosvenor, An Analysis of the Greek New Testament; Luke 1:41 aor. pass. from πίμπλημι fill *ibid.*; Luke 1:67 aor. pass. from πίμπλημι fill like 1:41; Acts 2:4 all 120 present believers; aor. pass. from πίμπλημι fill *ibid.*; Acts 4:8 Peter; aor. ptc. pass. from πίμπλημι fill *ibid.*; Acts 4:31 all; aor. pass. from πίμπλημι fill *ibid.*; Acts 9:17 Paul; aor. subj. pass. πίμπλημι τινος fill with *ibid.*; Acts 13:9 Paul; aor. ptc. pass. from πίμπλημι fill *ibid.*; Acts 13:52 the disciples in Antioch in Pisidia; impf. pass. from πληρώω fill; Eph 5:18 all believers should be filled; impv. pass. from πληρώω let yourselves be filled *ibid.*

The Aorist forms indicate a certain point in time when somebody is filled with the Holy Spirit to say something. The forms of the present tense stem speak of being filled with the Holy Spirit continuously or repeatedly.

He is likened to something fluid in the outpouring of the spirit. Peter quotes the prophet Joel 2:28f in his sermon in Acts 2:17-18 and affirms Joel's message as being fulfilled now in the events of Pentecost:

17 And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
18 even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit,
and they shall prophesy.

That Peter understood the outpouring of God's Spirit on the day of Pentecost as the fulfilment of Joel 2:28f is also implied in his words in Acts 2:33:

Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, **he has poured out** this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing²⁰.

The bold printed words (emphasis mine) identify Jesus with the Lord of Joel 2:28f who had promised to pour out his spirit.

By using the same term in Acts 10:45 Luke makes the experience of the household of Cornelius parallel to the experience of the Apostles and believers in the second chapter (see also Rom 5:5).

He is likened to something fluid which is being given to drink. Paul states that all believers receive the Spirit as something to drink (1 Cor 12:13).

20. τῇ δεξιᾷ οὖν τοῦ θεοῦ ὑψωθείς τὴν τε ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου λαβὼν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐξέχεεν τοῦτο ὃ ὑμεῖς βλέπετε καὶ ἀκούετε.

Jesus Christ is the rock in the wilderness from which living waters burst forth in 1 Cor 10:1-4) and in John 7:37-39:

37 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

John explains in 7:39 that the glorification of Jesus has to happen first, before the Holy Spirit can be received as life giving water. In John this includes the death of Jesus, his resurrection and going to the Father (12:23-24.31-32; 13:31-32; 16:5-7).

In the picture of the rock in the wilderness: Moses first had to strike the rock and then the waters could burst forth (Exodus 17:5-6; compare Isaiah 48:21; 41:18; 44:3-5; 12:3; 32:15; 55:1-4). Jesus first had to be hit by his sufferings at the cross and then the living water could come forth (John 19:34; 1 John 5:5-8). John 7:39 helps us to understand the gift of the living water in John 4:10-14 as the gift of the Holy Spirit. The woman could misunderstand Jesus, because the term "living water" was used for flowing water or fresh water, in contrast to standing water or stale water. Jesus took this well known phrase and filled it with a new meaning.

See also the "water of life" in Revelation 7:16-17; 21:6; 22:1-2.17

He is likened to oil. This is implied in Acts 10:37-38 where Peter says:

37 You yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him²¹.

21. Ἰησοῦν τὸν ἀπὸ Ναζαρέθ, ὡς ἔχρισεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεὸς πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ δυνάμει,

When John speaks of the anointing, he also means the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20-21.26-27). This anointing is something all believers have received and because of this they have a protection and remain faithful to Jesus ("abide in him"). Because they are anointed with the Holy Spirit they know what is true and what is false. They have spiritual discernment.

In the Old Testament there was the anointment of someone to be a high priest, a king, or a prophet. Whoever is anointed in the New Covenant has become a child of God and is separate from the world (1 John 3:1). The power of the anointment makes the person holy, sets him aside for his calling, to be a prophet, a king, a high priest or in our case a member of the family of God with kingship and priesthood included (Rv 5:10; 1 Peter 2:9).

Therefore we should not use the phrase "fresh anointment". It leads to a misunderstanding as though God's anointment could become stale or corrupted like vegetables and fruit that are no longer fresh. The holy anointment is done once and for all and has not to be repeated. David was anointed three times, but the decisive one was the first, done by the prophet Samuel. This was the divine one. The second by the tribe of Judah and the third by all of Israel was only a recognition of the first one that David was God's chosen and anointed king. We can only be born again once, once be baptized with the Holy Spirit and once be anointed to become a member of the family of God. All three phrases point to one and the same initial spiritual experience of being incorporated in Christ.

This is what Paul means in 2 Cor 1:21-22:

21 And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, 22 and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee²².

He is likened to a seal with which the believers are sealed. In the above quoted passage of 2 Cor 1:21-22 Paul combines the being anointed and

ὃς διήλθεν ἐνεργειῶν καὶ ἰώμενος πάντας τοὺς καταδυναστευομένους ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἦν μετ' αὐτοῦ•

22. 21 ὁ δὲ βεβαιῶν ἡμᾶς σὺν ὑμῖν εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ χρίσας ἡμᾶς θεός, 22 ὁ καὶ σφραγισάμενος ἡμᾶς καὶ δοὺς τὸν ἄρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν.

being sealed with the Holy Spirit. He uses the seal of the Holy Spirit again in Ephesians 1:13-14:

13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory²³.

The seal includes the idea of protection. Everyone who has been sealed with the Spirit, is set aside by the special protecting force of God so that he will be redeemed on the day of redemption. This idea is repeated in Eph 4:30-31.

He is likened to an advance payment as assurance of the rest to be given.

We have heard Paul already in 2 Cor 1:21-22:

21 And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, 22 and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

The word translated with "as a guarantee" is *arrabōn*²⁴. It could be translated "as a pledge". This means you give somebody money as a down payment so that he is sure you are in earnest and that the rest will come as well. So the Spirit is given to us as a present and an assurance to us that all the rest of God's salvation and glory will come. The idea is repeated in the same letter in 5:4-8. Because of the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit as a pledge in our hearts, we can carry on and endure all sufferings knowing that finally we will be home with the Lord for ever. The last step of our journey will bring us home.

23. 13 ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν, ἐν ᾧ καὶ πιστεύσαντες ἐσφραγίσθητε τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἁγίῳ, 14 ὃ ἐστὶν ἀρραβὼν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν, εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῆς περιποιήσεως, εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ.

24. ἀρραβὼν

He is likened to fire. John the Baptist says in Mt 3:11-12 and in Luke 3:16-17 that the coming one (= Jesus) "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire". The fire consumes everything which is not fit for God's kingdom, everything which is not spiritual but carnal. The wheat is gathered, the chaff is burnt. We can easily imagine how this fire has to continue throughout our lifetime. It is the refiner's fire and its aim is to make us more like Jesus or as in the picture of the trees: To make us people who bring forth good fruit (Matthew 3:8-10).

In Luke 12:49-50 Jesus explains:

49 "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! 50 I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!"

We can combine this passage Luke 3:16-17, and Acts 2:1-4 to identify the fire and the baptism Jesus is talking about: The fire is the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. The baptism is a baptism into suffering, Jesus being tortured, crucified, and murdered, carrying the sin of all mankind.

Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as a fire not to be quenched (1 Thes 5:19-22). Viewed in this context Paul seems to mean that we should give the Holy Spirit room in our service, not quenching his activities. But at the same time we should be on our guard. We should allow prophetic utterances, but we must examine them and only accept what is good and reject everything that is bad.

He is likened to tongues of fire. Luke writes about the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4):

1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

This text continues to show the Holy Spirit as fire, but it also adds a new element, the words "tongues as of fire". The word tongues in Greek does not only denote the part of the body called "the tongue", but the word also means "language", which is important in this chapter. The nearly 120 believers receive the gift to speak languages they have never learned so that people of all different areas and cultures can understand them, praising God (2:4-12). These languages of Pentecost underline the worldwide impact of this outpouring of God's Spirit on "all flesh".

Pentecost is the start of the gathering of the people of all nations and languages as the people of God. Pentecost corresponds to Genesis 11 and 12. In Genesis 11:1ff God had given the many languages to stop mankind from storming heaven by building the tower of Babylon. As a result mankind was also divided. In Genesis 12:1ff God had called one man through whose offspring he would bless all nations. They also would be united again by the unique source of the blessings, the son of Abraham, the coming Messiah.

Pentecost presents Jesus as this Messiah, the hope for all the world (Acts 1:7-8; 2:32-40). The fire started by this outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh has "all flesh" as its target and will spread to all nations without being stopped.

He is likened to a dove. We see this likeness in all four Gospels. Mt 3:16-17:

16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

See also Luke 3:21-22; Mark 1:10-11; John 1:29-34. What role does the dove play in all this? Just as the lamb could be a pure sacrifice animal and was worthy to become a picture of Jesus as the lamb of God, so was the dove a pure animal which could be used for sacrifices (see Luke 2:24; compare Matthew 10:16).

This makes it worthy to be a parable for the Holy Spirit. Some point to

Genesis 1:2 which talks of the Spirit of God perhaps behaving similar to a bird (not especially a dove):

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

The Hebrew verb which is translated here with "was hovering over" is also used for an eagle in Dt 32:11.

What I would like to do to answer the question of the dove, is to first have a look at the crucial points of our context and then look to the rest of the Bible for help. The main persons in all four Gospel contexts are the same: God the father, the Son, the Holy Spirit and John the Baptist who was also a prophet. What are the main actions? There are two actions: The baptism of Jesus on the one hand and his identification as the Son of God, the anointed Messiah, on the other. To understand the picture of the dove, we have to take all this into account.

John the Baptist is part of this. The summary of his prophetic message was (Matthew 3:2):

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

The same sentence could also be used as a summary of the preaching of Jesus (Matthew 4:17). The idea is an eschatological one: The coming of the kingdom of heaven or of God is the end of this world and the beginning of a new world and a new kingdom.²⁵

John understood his baptism as an expression of an eschatological movement waiting for the kingdom of God. Or expressed in the words of Isaiah 40: John's baptism was a preparation of the believer for the coming of God. It was a preparation of the way for the Lord to visit Israel. The people who repent and prepare themselves are saved; the others are blown away by God's "Spirit" or "scorching hot wind" (Is 40:7). This world comes to an end, and the coming of the kingdom of God starts the new world. And baptism is a sign of separation between the two worlds, the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of the world to come.

25. See Daniel 2:44 and 7:13-14.27; Matthew 24:35; 25:34.

Peter, who was both, a disciple of John the Baptist and secondly a disciple of Jesus, gives us an important piece of information about this aspect of baptism (1 Pt 3:18-22):

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, 19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. 21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

This text is not easy to understand. But for our purpose a few points are clear enough:

1. Christ has also preached to the generation of Noah "in the spirit".
2. Only eight of that generation were saved at the time of the flood being brought safely through the waters by the means of the ark.
3. The waters of Christian baptism can be compared to this. Whoever gets baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is dead to the old world and made alive to the new world in Christ (1 Peter 2:24-25). Peter compares the waters of the flood and the waters of baptism: Both waters have carried the believers from the finished old world to the shores of the blessed new world.

The dove does come right in here. There was a dove related to the flood story in Gen 6-8, especially in 8:8-12:

8 Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. 9 But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the

ark with him. 10 He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. 11 And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. 12 Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.

What did the sign of the dove tell Noah? "So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth" (8:11). The dove with "a freshly plucked olive leaf" was proof to Noah, the man of God, that the waters of judgment had passed away and the new world was ready to be inhabited. For Peter the flood story was very important. He comes back to it twice in his second letter (in 2 Peter 2:5 and in 3:5-7).

The latter passage will help our understanding:

5 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Peter seems to distinguish three worlds. The first world lasted from creation to the judgment of the waters of the flood. The second world we are living in now will last till the judgment of fire on the day of the Lord. The third world will be eternal, never ending, full of righteousness (2 Peter 3:13).

The way of salvation in the time of Noah was "to be in the ark", having accepted God's word of judgment over the old world and taking refuge in the ark by faith. The way of salvation nowadays is "to be in Christ", having accepted God's word of judgment over this world and taking refuge in God's mercy, in the crucified and risen Christ. Water baptism is the confession of the believer that Christ is his only hope of salvation.

If we now combine Peter's testimony and Christ's own baptism by John the Baptist and what happened afterwards, we can say this. As the dove was a sign to the man of God Noah that the new world had come and they were

free to enter it, so the Holy Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven on Jesus was a sign for the man of God John the Baptist. John knew therefore that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ (John 1:32-34):

32 And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33 I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

For John the Baptist, to enter the new world was to enter the kingdom of heaven. This would happen through the king of this kingdom of heaven, the Messiah. The Messiah is Jesus. He gives entrance into the kingdom of heaven by his baptizing the believers in the Holy Spirit and fire.

Here we see how the Holy Spirit, descending on the Messiah like a dove, fits in the picture. The dove of the flood had to wait till the waters of the judgment of the flood were gone. So the Holy Spirit had to wait for the Messiah to come, to be born and to grow up, and reach his age of service. The Holy Spirit had to wait for Jesus to come to the prophet John the Baptist, to be baptized by him in the waters of the Jordan river, to reveal to John the fact, the king is here: The kingdom of God has come at last. The heavens are open, the kingdom of heaven is open to be entered by faith in Jesus the Messiah, the son of God.

13.2.3 Divine Works of God's Spirit

He makes alive.

Jesus explains in his speech "I am the bread of life" held in the synagogue at Capernaum (John 6:63):

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life²⁶.

26. τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ ζωοποιῶν, ἡ σὰρξ οὐκ ὠφελεῖ οὐδέν• τὰ ῥήματα ἃ ἐγὼ
λελάληκα ὑμῖν πνεῦμά ἐστιν καὶ ζωὴ ἐστιν.

The hearers had misunderstood the words of Jesus. They thought Jesus meant that they had to eat his flesh and drink his blood literally to have eternal life (6:51-60). In our verse 6:63 Jesus explains to them that he had meant his words spiritually. It is a spiritual eating of the flesh and blood of Jesus. It is that I believe that his death at the cross is my salvation and that his rising from the dead on the third day is my eternal life. But this knowledge and faith is only born where the Holy Spirit uses the words of Jesus to open the eyes of a "dead sinner" to make him alive.

He responds to sin against the Holy Spirit with judgment.

Because of the divine nature of the Holy Spirit, sins against the Spirit are dangerous.

Blasphemy against him will not be forgiven. Jesus teaches this in three Gospels. Let us look at Mark 3:28-30:

28 "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"²⁷ — 30 for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

The last verse gives us a clue, as to what the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is. The enemies of Jesus identified the Holy Spirit working in Jesus with Beelzebul (Mark 3:22):

And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons."

When we read about the same event in Matthew we get more information (Mt 12:31-32): Here Jesus says that the sin is not forgiven in this time, or age, nor in the time or age to come. This is a Jewish way of talking of

27. ὃς δ' ἂν βλασφημήσῃ εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, οὐκ ἔχει ἄφεσιν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ἀλλὰ ἔνοχός ἐστιν αἰωνίου ἁμαρτήματος.

"neither in this world nor in the world to come". If a sin is not forgiven in this world nor the world to come, it means that it is never forgiven. That is exactly the way Mark puts it (3:29).

Matthew tells us also in 12:22-24 what miracle had triggered off the accusation of Jesus being possessed:

22 Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. 23 And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" 24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons."

The Pharisees were desperate to stop Jesus. They saw his influence spreading and growing all the time. So they took their refuge in the most vehement accusation; that Jesus was a servant of the devil, even that he was possessed by Satan. In his answer Jesus proves this to be a false accusation. After this Jesus states that this sin will never be forgiven. By identifying the Holy Spirit with the devil, they have totally shut their hearts to the influence of the Holy Spirit who would be the only one who is able to lead them to repentance. They are lost forever.

Luke 12:8-12 gives us some further help to understand a merciful part of the statement of Jesus:

8 "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, 9 but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. 10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. 11 And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

In Luke the context is the persecution of the believers. Believers should confess Jesus and not deny him. They should be firm and be guided by the Holy Spirit in their defense. But sometimes the pressure might become so great that a believer might grow weak and utter something against "the son of man", meaning against Jesus. Full of mercy Jesus says that this will be forgiven, meaning he himself will forgive it. This is exactly what happened to Peter who denied Jesus and put a curse between himself and his Lord. But Jesus forgave him in this world and changed him to become the rock, transformed by God's grace.

But at the same time Jesus distinguishes the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit from this sin against Jesus. Having Matthew 12 in mind, I think, we can say: The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit happens when somebody sees the clear work of God's Holy Spirit but deliberately identifies it with the work of the devil, shutting oneself and others off from the further influence of the Holy Spirit (compare Matthew 23:13). Because no repentance happens in this world it is a sin that is not forgiven.

If we can understand this sin in this way we can give comfort to those believers who are troubled and worried because they think they have somehow committed this sin against the Holy Spirit. Most probably their weakness lies somewhere else, more in the direction of 1 Thes 5:14, "Encourage the fainthearted." We must help troubled believers to have peace in Christ.

Those who have a share in the Holy Spirit and then fall away can not be renewed. Somehow related to the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is what is written in Hebrews 6:4-12:

4 For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come 6 if they then fall away, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. 7 For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. 8 But if it bears thorns

and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. 9 Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things — things that belong to salvation. 10 For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do. 11 And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The question we want to ask about this section is whether the writer thinks that the recipients have committed this sin or are in danger of committing it. The answer is no! See 6:9: "Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things — things that belong to salvation." I think he puts a theoretical possibility in front of them to scare them away from this possibility. It is like two people standing on a very high place and one telling the other: "If you jump down here, you are dead." It has not happened. It should not happen. The possibility is told to prevent the thing from happening.

The context makes it clear that he wants them to push forward, to make progress (6:1). He knows that they have repented, now they should make progress and grow. He wants to shock them forward (6:11-12).

When we compare Hebrews 6:7-8 with Matthew 7:15-23, it becomes clearer that the earth bringing forth thorns and thistles more relates to the area of false Christians and false prophets (compare also 2 Peter 2:1-3.12-22). But as in Matthew 7 and 2 Peter 2 this is used to shock the believers, to wake them up so that they really live what they believe and are called to.

We can recognize the same way of speaking and purpose in Hebrews 10:26-39:

26 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 29 How much worse punishment, do

you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?
 30 For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

We can again ask the question as to whether the writer of this letter thinks that the recipients are about to commit this sin (10:26) or not. I think he only wants to scare them away from it as he says in 10:39: "But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls." And then he develops in a positive way the whole subject of faith in chapter 11 and points to "Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith" in chapter 12 (verse 2). The author is confident that they will get saved in the end, but they will have to remain faithful to the end. To help them with this, he has written the letter (Hebrew 13:22).

To lie to the Holy Spirit or put him to the test, was a grave sin punished by death. We read in Acts 5:1-11 that Ananias and Sapphira died because Satan had filled their heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for themselves part of the proceeds of the land they had sold to give the whole to the church. They had "agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord". This divine judgment triggered off a great fear amongst the believers and all who heard about it (5:5.11).

Luke tells us that there was a great revival in Jerusalem during the times of Acts 2-5 (see 2:41.47; 4:4.31-33; 5:12-16). Whenever there are times of great revival and God works marvelous miracles, the responsibility of the believers is raised to a higher level (Cf. Luke 12:48).

Reading this we must remember that a believer can die because of his sin, but this does not automatically mean that he will go to hell. It could be that this is an act of education of God for his people to teach them his holiness with the intention that the sinner might get saved in the end (1 Cor 11:30-32; 5:1-5; Ez 18:23).

Chapter 14

The Holy Spirit Empowers People

14.1 The Holy Spirit Empowers People in the Old Testament.

14.1.1 God's Spirit Is the Instructor and Guide for God's People.

... in the 40 years of the wilderness

The leading Levites in the time of Nehemiah (about 445 B.C.) pray in Nehemiah 9:20-21:

20 You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. 21 Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.

Amongst the gifts God provided Israel in their 40 years in the desert was this gift: "You imparted your good Spirit [rûḥa-kā ḥaṭ-ṭôbāh] to instruct them". They would have thought of Moses as having been guided by the

spirit and also of Aaron and Miriam as spiritual leaders. God instructed Israel throughout the 40 years in the desert through his spirit.

... providing God's presence as part of his covenant promise

In 520 B.C. the prophet Haggai encourages the leaders and the people of Judah to build the temple (2:4-5):

4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD.
Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest.
Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD.
Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, 5
according to the covenant that I made with you when you
came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear
not.

God has promised in his covenant to be with his people. This means in the words of God here through Haggai, "My Spirit [rûḥî] remains in your midst." My spirit has always been with you from Egypt to this very day. Therefore do not fear!

14.1.2 God's Spirit Is Empowering People for Certain Tasks.

The Spirit enables them to be wise, just and effective rulers.

Joseph becomes Egypt's vice regent because he has the spirit of God [rûaḥ 'ēlōhîm] (Gn 41:38):

And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?"

Moses could lead the people together with seventy chosen elders because of God's Spirit was on him and came on the 70 as well (Numbers 11:24-25; see also Is 63:11-12). When **Joshua** became the successor of Moses, the gift of the spirit was crucial (Nm 27:15-20; Dt 34:9 If we combine Nm 11:16-17, 11:24-25, 27:15-20, and Dt 34:9, we can understand the spirit of wisdom as God's Spirit granting the wisdom necessary for leading Israel.

Othniel became one of Israel's Judges under the Spirit's guidance (Judges 3:9-10). The expression "The Spirit of the LORD was upon him" is "watəhî 'ālāw rūaḥ yhwḥ". This signals the "start" of the Spirit being upon him. Therefore some translate "the Spirit of the LORD came upon him". This is used frequently when the Lord wanted to do something through somebody in a special situation. He empowered him in this way. See also **Jephthah** in Judges 11:29.

Look at Judges 6:34 "the Spirit of the LORD clothed **Gideon**" [wə-rūaḥ yhwḥ lābəšāḥ 'et gid'on] "and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him." This metaphor seems to say that the Lord's Spirit is like clothes for Gideon. And because military action follows, it points to the receiving of power and ability to lead God's army in war and defeat the enemy. Compare Ephesians 6:10-20 as a New Testament parallel.

See also **Samson** (Judges 13:24-25; 14:5-6.19; 15:12-15) and **Saul** (1 Sm 10:6-10; 11:5-7; 19:23) and **David** (1 Sm 16:13; 2 Sam 23:1-2; 1 Chr 28:11-12); Ps 51:10-13).

We learn from Lam 4:20 that **the king of Israel** as the anointed has great importance for all citizens: he is "the breath of our nostrils, the LORD's anointed" [rūaḥ 'appēnū məšīaḥ yhwḥ]

. When he "was captured in their pits, of whom we said, "Under his shadow we shall live among the nations" this was a big blow for God's people.

Being the anointed, the king is the bearer of God's Spirit. At the same time he is the "breath of our nostrils", describing him as "life giving" or "life" for the whole nation. He can only have such great importance through the Spirit of God, given to him by being the anointed one. If he does not obey God and his Spirit, the damage is even greater. If he is taken away by God's judgment, hope is quenched as the breath is taken, and the nation is choked.

In contrast to this the coming **Messiah** from the house of David is to be the one who will change the world by God's sevenfold spirit (Is 11:1-4):

1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,

and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

2 And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

(wəṇāḥāḥ 'ālāw rūaḥ yḥwh
rūaḥ ḥokmāḥ ûḥînāḥ
rūaḥ 'ēṣāḥ ûḡəḇûrāḥ
rūaḥ da'at wəyir'at yḥwh)

3 And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
(ûḇərūaḥ śəḇāṭāw yāmîṭ rāšā')

In 11:2 there are seven words used with the "Spirit": the first word being the "Lord". Seven symbolizes the fullness of the work of the Lord's Spirit in the Messiah and through him. The Holy Spirit empowers the Messiah to establish God's justice throughout the world resulting in an everlasting peace (Isa 9:6). He shall kill the wicked "with the breath of his lips". This means that he has only to utter the verdict and it is realized, even if it means that the wicked drops dead (compare Acts 5:4-10; 2 Thes 2:8).

The same work is the task of **the servant of the Lord** in Isa 42:1-4, and he is given the same spirit to accomplish it:

1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
(nāṭattî rūḥî 'ālāw)
he will bring forth justice to the nations.

2 He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;

3 a bruised reed he will not break,
 and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
 he will faithfully bring forth justice.
 4 He will not grow faint or be discouraged
 till he has established justice in the earth;
 and the coastlands wait for his law.

Within the book of Isaiah the Messiah of Is 7-11 and the personal servant of God in Is 42-53 seem to point to the same person, the future saviour of the world, who is here called light of the nations and who frees the prisoners (Isa 42:6-7).

These same qualities are presented by the speaker of Isa 61:1-2 pointing to the same person:

1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
 because the LORD has anointed me
 (rûaḥ 'ăḏonāy yḥwḥ 'ālāy
 ya'an māšaḥ yḥwḥ 'oṭī)
 to bring good news to the poor;
 he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
 to proclaim liberty to the captives,
 and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
 and the day of vengeance of our God;
 to comfort all who mourn.

God's Spirit inspires good workmanship for the tabernacle and temple.

He gives inspiration for the work related to the tabernacle. Ex 28:3

You shall speak to all the skillful,
 whom I have filled with a spirit of skill,
 (wə-'attāḥ təḏabbēr 'el kol ḥakmê lēḇ
 'ăšer millē'ûw rûaḥ ḥokmāḥ)
 that they make Aaron's garments
 to consecrate him for my priesthood.

If we combine this verse with the next section we know that "the spirit of wisdom" here is God's Spirit granting wisdom to do this kind of work: Ex 31:1-5:

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, 3 and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability (wā’āmallē’ ’ōtô rūaḥ ’ēlōhîm bəḥokmāh) and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, 4 to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, 5 in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.

The same idea is repeated in Ex 35:30-35, but in addition the gift of teaching these skills is mentioned.

He inspires David's plans related to the temple. Davied gave the plans to Solomon for the work related to the temple (1 Chr 28:11-13.

He grants the gift of prophecy.

1. Israel's 70 elders Numbers 11:24-26
2. Balaam Nm 24:1-9; 24:17-19; 31:8,16; 25:1-18; 2 Pt 2:15-16
3. Saul 1 Sm 10:6,10-14; 19:23-24
4. Saul's messengers 1 Sm 19:20-21
5. Elijah 2 Kings 2:9-13
6. Elisha 1 Kings 19:16; 2 Kings 2:14-15
7. Micaiah 1 Kings 22:24
8. Amasai 1 Chr 12:18)
9. Azariah the son of Oded 2 Chr 15:1-2
10. Jahaziel the son of Zechariah 2 Chr 20:13-17)

11. Zechariah the son of Jehoiada 2 Chr 24:20-22)
12. Ezekiel Ezekiel 2:1-2; 3:22-24); 11:5-8)
13. Micah Micah 3:8

The Holy Spirit working through the prophets There are also some passages in the Old Testament speaking summarily about the service of the prophets in the power of God's Spirit. The leading Levites in the time of Nehemiah (about 445 B.C.)¹ pray in Nehemiah 9:30-31:

30 Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. 31 Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

When they say, "You ... warned them by your Spirit through your prophets" (watā'ad bām bə-rûḥākā bə-yad nābî'êkā) they mean that God's Spirit used the prophets to testify the truth to them and admonish them.

Hosea and Zechariah reflect on the disobedience of former Israel towards God's prophets in Hos 9:7-8 and Zec 7:11-12.

According to Joel 2:28-29 the outpouring of God's Spirit "on all flesh" in the last days will result in the use of spiritual gifts, one of them being prophecy. For the fulfillment of this prophecy see Acts 2:16-21. For the use of the "outpouring of the Holy Spirit" compare Acts 2:17.18.33; 10:45; Rom 5:5 and Titus 3:5-6.

He miraculously transports people from one place to another.

Elijah It seems to have been a well known phenomenon that God would take the prophet from one place and put him down in another

1. F. Ch. Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 7.

(1 Kings 18:9-12); 2 Kings 2,1-18). In the second section Elijah was taken up to heaven, this time "transported" away forever, joining Enoch who had had a similar experience long before (Gen 5:24; Hebrews 11:5).

Ezekiel Another prophet with this experience of being transported from one place to another was Ezekiel (Ez 3:12-15; 8:1-4). It is interesting that this visionary transportation experience opens and closes the vision cycle in Ez 8-11. Ezekiel had been transported in Ez 8-11 to Jerusalem and back to witness the sins of Jerusalem and to prophecy that God's glory had left his temple and the city.

Again he has this experience in Ez 43:1-5 to witness the opposite, namely that God's glory will return to the New Jerusalem in the age of salvation. In Ez 37:1 this experience stands at the beginning of a vision; it is the vision of the dry bones which will be made alive again miraculously by God's Spirit.

14.1.3 God's Spirit as a Regenerating Gift for God's People.

When the spirit came upon all the 70 elders in spite of the fact that two had been disobedient before, it was Joshua who wanted Moses to stop the two. But Moses replied (Nm 11:29):

But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake?
Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the
LORD would put his Spirit on them!" (û-mî yittēn kōl 'am
yhwh nābî'im kî yittēn yhwh 'et rūhō 'ălêhem)

This is the first time in the Bible that we have the wish that all might receive God's Spirit. Later God promised through prophets that he would do exactly this. We learn from Isaiah 32:14-17, that the inhabited land will first become like a desert in God's judgment, but after the pouring out of the Spirit, the wilderness will be changed again to a fertile field. The same idea is repeated in Isaiah 44:3-4. See also Is 59:20-21; Joel 2:28-29.

Ezekiel uses, for the coming renewal of God's people, these words (Ez 11:19-20) :

19 And I will give them one heart,
 and a new spirit I will put within them.
 (wə-rûaḥ ḥădāšāh 'ettēn bə-qirbəkem)
 I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh
 and give them a heart of flesh,
 20 that they may walk in my statutes
 and keep my rules and obey them.
 And they shall be my people,
 and I will be their God.

See also Ez 18:30-32. In the light of Ez 36:24-27 it becomes clear that the receiving of the "new spirit" in these verses is related to receiving the Spirit of God (see also Ez 39:28-29; 37:1-14; Zech 12:10).

14.2 The Holy Spirit Empowers People in the New Testament.

14.2.1 The Holy Spirit Has a Unique Relationship with Jesus.

Mary Conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

The incarnation, the miracle that God became man in Jesus Christ, is the greatest of all miracles. God and man are united in one person. According to the Holy Scriptures this miracle was brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit. We read in Matthew 1:18-23:

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the

Holy Spirit². 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”
 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).

We are told twice (1:18 and 20) that Jesus was conceived by Mary through the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was conceived and born by a virgin in fulfillment of Is 7:14. He became the "Immanuel", "God with us", "God with man". Here, of course, the meaning is that God is with us to save us. Therefore the name of Jesus was given: "The Lord saves".

While Matthew 1 gives us a testimony more from the perspective of Joseph, Luke 1 shows us how Mary heard the news of her special calling. When she was told that she will become the mother of the Messiah, she has a question (Luke 1:34-38):

34 And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” 35 And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God³. 36 And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God.” 38 And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

Because Mary conceived Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus would be called "holy" and the "Son of God". All this is a great miracle from God, who can do what is impossible for man.

2. ταῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐνθυμηθέντος ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος κυρίου κατ' ὄναρ ἐφάνη αὐτῷ λέγων• Ἰωσήφ υἱὸς Δαβὶδ, μὴ φοβηθῇς παραλαβεῖν Μαρίαν τὴν γυναῖκά σου, τὸ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ γεννηθὲν ἐκ πνεύματος ἔστιν ἁγίου•

3. καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ ἄγγελος εἶπεν αὐτῇ• Πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σέ, καὶ δύναμις Ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει σοι• διὸ καὶ τὸ γεννώμενον ἅγιον κληθήσεται, υἱὸς θεοῦ•

The Holy Spirit Descends on Jesus and Stays on Him.

Like a dove. We have discussed these passages (Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32-33) already above (section 13.2.2). See also Isaiah 42:1; Mt 12:17-21; Luke 4:16-21; Is 61:1-2.

Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

We have already looked at these references (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33) above (section 13.2.2).

Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit.

We have seen earlier that Jesus is one of a few people in the New Testament who were constantly full of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1-2). This empowered him to be victorious even under spiritual attack from the devil and to overcome all kinds of evil.

Jesus was guided by the Holy Spirit.

Closely related to his being full of the Holy Spirit is the fact that the Spirit could guide Jesus (Luke 4:1; Matthew 4:1; Mk 1:12).

Jesus was working in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Before Luke mentions that Jesus went to his home town Nazareth and was rejected there, he gives the following summary statement of the activities of Jesus in Luke 4:14-15:

14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.⁴ 15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

4. Καὶ ὑπέστρεψεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ πνεύματος εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν. καὶ φήμη ἐξῆλθεν καθ' ὅλης τῆς περιχώρου περὶ αὐτοῦ.

The context makes it very clear that the teaching of Jesus was very powerful (4:15) and miracles happened as well (4:23).

A special kind of miracle in the power of the Holy Spirit was the casting out of demons (Matthew 12:24-30): The great power of Jesus to cast out demons was not doubted, even by his enemies. All agreed that Jesus had great spiritual power, but they explained it in different ways. His enemies accused him of having this power from the devil (Beelzebul)⁵ himself. But Jesus answers them that if this were the case, then Satan would cast out Satan, and this would mean civil war within the kingdom of darkness. This would also imply the end of this dark kingdom. So Jesus proves that their ideas are illogical. The only true explanation left is: "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12:28).

Jesus could be jubilant in the Holy Spirit.

In Luke 10:1ff Jesus sends the 72 disciples out two by two. When they came back and gave a report of what had happened, Jesus was full of joy (10:21-22).

This teaches us that the happiness of God (1 Tim 6:15 *makariōs*⁶) is also a characteristic of the Holy Spirit and is found in the life of Jesus Christ. Today in Christ, wherever the Holy Spirit works, you find joy as fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22) and as part of the kingdom of God (Rom 14:17).

God has given Jesus the Holy Spirit fully, not in portions.

Within the Gospel of John we have the witness of John the Baptist about Jesus (John 3:30-36): In this testimony Jesus is the one "who comes from above and is above all", while John himself is "of the earth" (31). John says, that the teaching of Jesus is special, because Jesus is an eye

5. Compare 2 Kings 1:2-3.6.16.

6. ἦν καιροῖς ἰδίους δείξει ὁ μακάριος καὶ μόνος δυνάστης, ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων καὶ κύριος τῶν κυριευόντων. *μακάριος* means happy, joyful. It is often translated with "blessed".

witness of heavenly realities and truths (32). John knows the fact that people normally will not accept the teaching of Jesus, because it is too foreign for them, and only some will do so and acknowledge that "God is true" (32-33).

"For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure." The fact that Jesus has come from above and is above all and teaches God's truth, is related to the other fact that he has God's Spirit in an unlimited way, without measure. So John the Baptist here teaches us that God the Father has given everything to Jesus and that God the Spirit is fully with him. The Trinity works in Jesus for the salvation of all mankind. Therefore whoever does not want to have faith and trust in the Son, remains under the wrath of God (36).

John the apostle, who has noted down this testimony of John the Baptist, gives us the same teaching in Revelation 3:1; 5:6.

Jesus had to be glorified before the Spirit's coming.

We read in John 7:39:

Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

We have seen above ?? that the glorification of Jesus includes his crucifixion, resurrection, and going to the father which had to happen before the Holy Spirit could come and be received by the believers.

The Holy Spirit is a witness to Jesus.

According to John 15:26 a main task of the Holy Spirit is to affirm that Jesus is really the one he claims to be (see also 1 John 5:6-9; Rev 19:10; Acts 5:31-32).

As God makes alive by his divine breath so does Jesus.

See below (section 14.2.3) the explanation of John 20:22 and 1 Corinthians 15:45.

Jesus has poured out the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

Peter declares in Acts 2:32-33 that the visible and audible coming of the Holy Spirit had been triggered by Jesus having risen from the dead and being exalted to the highest position in heaven:

32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. 33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.⁷

Jesus teaches and commands through the Holy Spirit.

In the beginning of Acts (1:1-2) Luke tells us that the content of the first book was what "Jesus began to do and teach" until his ascension; a ministry that was crowned by his being the risen one and giving commandments in the power of the Holy Spirit to his chosen apostles. What Luke seems to imply by saying this is that his second book (meaning "Acts") deals with what Jesus "continues" to do and to teach in the power of the same Holy Spirit directing the history of the church from his exalted place above.

Jesus was appointed as the Son of God according to the Holy Spirit through his being raised from the dead.

In Romans 1:3-4 Paul speaks the gospel of God

3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.⁸

7. τῇ δεξιᾷ οὖν τοῦ θεοῦ ὑψωθείς τὴν τε ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου λαβὼν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐξέχεεν τοῦτο ὃ ὑμεῖς βλέπετε καὶ ἀκούετε.

8. 3 περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, 4 τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν

Jesus is a true heir to the throne of David according to the flesh, but he has been singled out from the many sons of David by being anointed with the Holy Spirit who has proven him to be the Messiah by his overcoming even the last enemy, death (see 1 Cor 15:26). In 1 Cor 15:45 Paul explains the implications of the incarnation, the death and resurrection of Jesus:

Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.⁹

The "last Adam", Christ, first became a son of Adam in his incarnation, then died to the old human nature on the cross and has, having risen from the dead, the new quality of being "a life-giving spirit". Here we have a line of thought that we have seen before: that the death of Christ and his resurrection (and ascension) are the foundation of his pouring out the Spirit on Pentecost. Christ became the door to our salvation and the spirit-fellowship of God's family (John 10:7-9; 1:12-13; 3:3.5.16; see also 1 Pet 3:18-20)

God's Spirit leads to the confession that Jesus is Lord.

When Paul starts his explanation of how to handle the spiritual gifts, he writes in 1 Cor 12:3:

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

We can learn from this that someone speaking under the influence of a spirit and cursing Jesus, is not speaking through God's Spirit but is deceived by another spirit. So for Paul Christology is the basic measure for recognizing a genuine from a false prophet. The statement, "Jesus

9. οὕτως καὶ γέγραπται• Ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν• ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιόν.

10. διὸ γνωρίζω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ λαλῶν λέγει• Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς, καὶ οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν• Κύριος Ἰησοῦς εἰ μὴ ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ.

is Lord", means the identification of Jesus of Nazareth with the "Lord", the God of Israel. Compare for this Phil 2:9-11 with Isaiah 45:22-25 and Rom 10:9-13 with Joel 2:32). Only a person, whose eyes have been opened by the power of the Holy Spirit, can believe from his heart that Jesus Christ is God incarnate.

John has the same approach in his first letter (4:2-3.6): The statement "that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh", points to the incarnation of God as explained in John 1:1-3.14. The idea is that Jesus is God who became a human being ("flesh") and has the title of "Christ" being the King and Saviour of Israel and all nations.

Jesus was revealed as righteous through the Spirit.

Paul gives in hymnic language what sounds like an early creed (1 Tim 3:16):

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:
He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.¹¹

The words, "He was manifested in the flesh," point again to God's incarnation in Christ. But Christ was rejected and condemned to the shameful death of the cross. His vindication, his being declared righteous, happened "by the Spirit" pointing not to his own human spirit, but to the Holy Spirit of God in the power of the resurrection.

11. καὶ ὁμολογουμένως μέγα ἐστὶν τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον·
ὁ ὢς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί,
ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι,
ὤφθη ἀγγέλοις,
ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν,
ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ,
ἀνελήμφθη ἐν δόξῃ.

Jesus presented his blood through the Spirit to the Father.

We read in Heb 9:13-14:

13 For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.¹²

According to this passage Christ has sacrificed himself, his life and his blood "through the eternal Spirit", meaning God's Holy Spirit. This helps us to understand that the application of what happened on earth, at Golgotha, to the heavenly realms and God's presence, was done, and is done through God's Spirit. The triune God was active on Good Friday: God the Son being at the same time the High Priest and the sacrifice offered, the Father accepting this sacrifice as the sufficient atonement for the whole world¹³ and the "eternal Spirit" through whom this sacrifice was offered to the Father. The fruit of the salvation of this day is eternal because of the eternal Spirit.

14.2.2 God's Spirit Is God's Gift for All His People.

Repentance is necessary to receive the Holy Spirit.

When the sermon of Peter had made a strong impact on many people on the day of Pentecost they asked what they should do. He answered (Acts 2:38):

Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

12. πόσω μᾶλλον τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν ἁμωμον τῷ θεῷ, καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν ἡμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι.

13. See John 1:29; 1 John 2:2; 2 Cor 5:19.

The people of Jerusalem had cried out and demanded from Pilate that he crucify Jesus (Luke 23:18-24; Acts 2:22-23). This was done publicly. Now every single one of them had to repent from this and all their other sins and show it publicly by becoming baptized in the name of this same Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah. God then would forgive their sins and grant them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Whoever hears the Gospel with faith receives the Holy Spirit.

In his letter to the Galatians (3:1-6.13-14) Paul wants to show them that salvation depends on faith alone and not on the works of the law. In this context to receive the Holy Spirit is the assurance of salvation.

The circumcision of the heart is a work of the Holy Spirit.

For the Jews in the first century, circumcision was a very important thing. It was the sign of belonging to the covenant of God with Abraham. Therefore they looked down on the uncircumcised as lost and far away from God. Paul explains in his letter to the Romans (2:28-29) that the true circumcision is a change of heart received by the Holy Spirit.

There is a contrast between the Spirit and the letter.

The letter stands for the law of the Old Testament written on the stone tablets of the 10 commandments, which were received through the service of Moses. This letter kills, meaning it does not give life, but has to punish the sinner through the curse and punishment of the law. The Spirit (Holy Spirit) stands for the service of the New Covenant, under which the same will of God is written on the tablets of the heart of the believers, giving them new and spiritual life, helping them to live according to God's will, according to the Spirit. This Spirit makes alive (Rom 2:29; 7:6; 8:2-6; 2 Cor 3:3-8.18; 3:18).

All who have received the Spirit of Christ are really Christ's.

From Rom 8:9 we learn the important principle that any person without Christ's Spirit is not really his:

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.¹⁴

In every Christian there is an ongoing spiritual struggle.

According to Gal 5:16-17 there is a war being waged between the body or flesh on the one side, and the spirit (the spirit of the believer together with the Holy Spirit) on the other:

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

According to Paul the realm of the flesh is death, the realm of the Spirit is life (Rom 8:10-13; Gal 5:25; 6:8). Therefore the real children of God let themselves be guided by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18).

In consequence of their being guided by the Spirit, they bring forth the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

Believers have received the firstfruits of the Spirit.

In Rom 8 Paul speaks of the future liberation of creation from its bondage to decay and that creation therefore waits for the revealing of the sons of God which is somehow related to this big future change. And then Paul says (Rom 8:23):

14. Ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ἀλλὰ ἐν πνεύματι, εἴπερ πνεῦμα θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν. εἰ δέ τις πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ οὐκ ἔχει, οὗτος οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῦ.

And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.¹⁵

The firstfruits signal the beginning of the harvest. Much more is to come. When the believers here have received the firstfruits of the Spirit, they are the first to enjoy the spiritual blessings of God related to salvation and the new age to come. Firstfruits means that the believers will get even more: here, in the context of the redemption of their bodies in the resurrection, and also by being revealed as the true children of God. But firstfruits here means also that the whole of creation has something to look forward to and to receive.

Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit.

In John 3:5-8 Jesus explains to Nicodemus:

5 ... “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

The new birth is necessary to introduce the deep change in the human heart which is necessary to prepare it for the eternal world (the kingdom of God). Otherwise temporary man (flesh born from flesh) remains perishable.

The new birth puts the emphasis on the new spiritual life of which it is the beginning. To be born "of water and the Spirit" is to be born of the Holy Spirit while the water in the context of John 1-4 may point

15. οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν, νίοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν.

to the repentance movement of John the Baptist. In John 1:26-27 the Baptist says:

“I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.”

What John means is: "I baptize you only in water." On the next day John will say about Jesus (he who comes after me) that he will baptize in the Holy Spirit (John 1:33). In this context "being born of water and the Spirit" would convey the message to Nicodemus that he needed to repent and prepare himself for the kingdom of God by accepting the message of John the Baptist (Mt 3:2.6; Mk 1:4; Jn 3:23-4:2) and getting baptized in water as a public sign of his repentance from his sins.

But this is "only" the water part given by John the Baptist. The one stronger than John will baptize with the Spirit and fire (Mk 1:8; Mt 3:11). To receive this baptism with the Spirit all have to wait till he is raised to the cross (John 3:14-16), has risen from the dead and gone to heaven to send the Spirit (John 7:37-39; 16:7). Then they have to trust in Christ the crucified, risen and exalted Lord so that they do not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Water is of course also a means of cleansing in John 3:5, with or without pointing to water baptism. Jesus and Nicodemus are two teachers of the law, or Old Testament (3:2.10), talking to each other about the kingdom of God. Therefore it is quite possible that the phrase "born of water and the Spirit" is pointing to an Old Testament text, like Ez 36:25-27:

25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

The same idea of a cleansing bath and renewal is also found in Paul's letter to Titus 3:4-7: Reading the phrase "washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" many think of water baptism. But it might be better to think of the act of being born again as an act of cleansing by the Holy Spirit which resembles the washing of our body but is a spiritual act. This is also the reason why water baptism is a fitting visible demonstration of a reality which is spiritual and invisible.

Everyone reborn is a child of God.

In his letter to the Romans (8:14-17) Paul praises the sonship of believers (see also Gal 4:6-7.28-29; Eph 2:18-19; 1 John 3:24; 4:13; Heb 12:9).

The fellowship of God's Spirit unites all believers.

In 1 Cor 12:12-13 Paul wants to speak of the unity of the church in spite of the diversity of the gifts and uses the metaphor of the human body:

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

The desire of the blessing in 2 Cor 13:14 expresses a similar idea that all can share the fellowship of the same Holy Spirit (see also Eph 4:4-7; 4:11-16; Phil 2:1-2;

God gives his Spirit to those who ask in Prayer.

Having seen the importance of the Holy Spirit for the whole realm of our spiritual life it is a great encouragement for a healthy prayer life to hear what Jesus has to say about prayer and the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13):

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

Only those who obey God receive His Spirit.

Besides prayer there is another condition for receiving the Holy Spirit and that is obedience (Acts 5:32):

And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.

It is necessary to worship God in Spirit and in truth.

When Jesus was asked by the Samaritan woman in John 4 about the right place of worship, he helped her to realize that true worship of God can only be realized by people who have received the "living water", the Holy Spirit (4:10-15; 7:37-39). He explains to her the great change that is about to happen (4:21-24):

21 ... Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.¹⁶

To worship God "in spirit and truth" means to worship God truthfully, that is, according to the truth. The opposite would be to worship God hypocritically, lying, not really, not according to the truth. Such hypocritical worship is associated with the one who is "the liar from the beginning" (John 8:44-45).

16. 23 ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστίν, ὅτε οἱ ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνηταὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ πατρὶ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, καὶ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ τοιούτους ζητεῖ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτόν• 24 πνεῦμα ὁ θεός, καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτόν ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ δεῖ προσκυνεῖν.

God's Spirit stays within believers.

Within the Gospel of John the chapters 14-16 contain very important statements of Jesus about the Holy Spirit. We find one of them in John 14:15-17:

15 If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

In these verses there is a chain of events leading to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a believer: 1. He loves Jesus and therefore accepts and keeps his teaching. 2. Jesus asks the Father to give the "Helper", the Spirit, to the believer. 3. The Spirit stays with this believer for ever. This of course was first true in the lives of the disciples Jesus was talking to in this discourse. But John has written this for believers yet to come because it is equally true for them (John 17:20; 20:31).

God's Spirit gives power to believers.

... to be effective witnesses of Jesus Christ worldwide. When Jesus was about to ascend to heaven, he promised a great change (Acts 1:8):

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

This was of course, first an address to the apostles (Acts 1:2), but the task of the great commission was greater than the lifetime of the apostles and was inherited by the church. The apostle Paul, who was of course not present at the time of Acts 1:8, later learned the same truth and speaks of it again and again (Rom 15:18-19; 1 Cor 2:3-5; 1 Thes 1:4-5).

... to have abundant hope. According to Paul in Rom 15:13 one powerful influence of the Holy Spirit is hope:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

See also Gal 5:5.

... to be strengthened in the inner man. In his intercession for the believers in Ephesus Paul prays that the strength of the Holy Spirit may strengthen the believer in his inner being (Eph 3:14-16).

God's Spirit helps believers in court.

Jesus teaches that the Spirit gives the persecuted believers a special help in court appearances (Matthew 10:17-20; Mk 13:11; Luke 12:11-12).

God's Spirit can talk and give special guidance.

In Acts 8:29 we see the evangelist Philip in Spirit-guided action:

And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot."

See also Acts 10:19-20; 11:12; 13:2; 16:6-10:

The church grows through the comfort of God's Spirit.

After Paul's conversion the very tough persecution ended and a time of peace began for the church all over Israel. Luke writes about this time of growth (Acts 9:31):

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

God's Spirit appoints the leadership of a local church.

We learn from Acts 20:28 that Paul sees the work of the Holy Spirit in the appointment of the elders of Ephesus:

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

God's Spirit helps in prayer life and intercession.

In Rom 8 Paul teaches about suffering in this world and the glory to come. Believers suffer a lot and are weak. They need special help. This is where the Spirit comes in (Rom 8:26-28):

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.¹⁷

The phrase "too deep for words" means literally "without words" or "without speech" (alalētōis)¹⁸. This excludes "speaking in tongues" (lalēin glōssais)¹⁹ which some people see here, which is of course "with words" or "with speech". No, Paul here means the help of the Holy Spirit in the life of every believer such that the problems and requests of his life may be presented before God in a fitting way. Then God answers the intercession of the Holy Spirit to the effect that "all things work together for good" for believers (see also Eph 6:18; Jude 20-21).

17. 26 Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα συναντιλαμβάνεται τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ ἡμῶν• τὸ γὰρ τί προσευξώμεθα καθὼς δεῖ οὐκ οἶδαμεν, ἀλλὰ αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα ὑπερεντυγχάνει στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις, 27 ὁ δὲ ἐρανῶν τὰς καρδίας οἶδεν τί τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος, ὅτι κατὰ θεὸν ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἁγίων.

18. ἀλαλήτοις

19. λαλεῖν γλώσσαις

Without God's Spirit there is no kingdom of God.

In Rom 14:17 Paul explains what the kingdom of God is:

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.²⁰

The Gentile believers are sanctified through God's Spirit.

When Paul leads non-Jews to faith in God through the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he knows that God accepts them, because they are "sanctified by the Holy Spirit"²¹ (Rom 15:15-16; see also 1 Cor 6:9-11; 2 Thes 2:13; 1 Peter 1:1-2).

Believers are cleansed through God's Spirit.

Paul uses the picture of being washed and so cleansed (1 Cor 6:11):

And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Believers are made righteous through God's Spirit.

In the same verse we have the gift of justification mentioned (1 Cor 6:11). I think that the meaning of 1 Peter 4:6 is comparable:

For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.²²

20. οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ βρώσις καὶ πόσις, ἀλλὰ δικαιοσύνη καὶ εἰρήνη καὶ χαρὰ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ•

21. ἡγιασμένη ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.

22. Quoted according to KJV, The Holy Bible - King James Version (Oxford: Oxford University Press). εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ νεκροῖς εὐηγγελίσθη ἵνα κριθῶσι μὲν κατὰ ἀνθρώπους σαρκὶ ζῶσι δὲ κατὰ θεὸν πνεύματι.

Some believers who had heard the Gospel and accepted it, while they were still alive, have then been condemned to death by unjust judges and martyred in the flesh. But according to God's judgment they are worthy to live forever in the realm of the Spirit.

God's Spirit generates love in believers.

Paul urges the believers in Rome to pray for him (Rom 15:30):

I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf.

The phrase "love of the Spirit" means probably the "love which the Holy Spirit generates" in the believers.

Every believer is one spirit with the Lord.

Paul warns the Corinthians of sexual immorality (1 Cor 6:15-18):

15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.²³ 18 Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

The unity of a believer with the Lord in the spirit resembles the unity of a man and a woman in the body (see Gen 2:24). Therefore any believer who commits sexual immorality is heading for great trouble and God's judgment in his life (1 Cor 3:16-17).

23. ὁ δὲ κολλώμενος τῷ κυρίῳ ἓν πνεῦμά ἐστιν.

A service for God must be a service in the Holy Spirit.

For Paul true servants of God²⁴ serve him "in the Holy Spirit"²⁵ (2 Cor 6:4.6; see also Phil 3:3).

Believers preserve their treasures through God's Spirit.

Paul admonishes Timothy (2 Tim 1:14):

By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.²⁶

God's Spirit rests on believers.

Peter comforts the persecuted Christians (1 Pet 4:14):

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.²⁷

See also Luke 2:25-27.

Paul and the influence of God's Spirit on his thinking.

Paul's conscience gives witness in the Holy Spirit (Rom 9:1-2) and his counsel about remaining unmarried if possible is not given without the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 7:40).

14.2.3 Whoever Accepts Jesus Receives God's Spirit.

There are some relevant sections in John and Acts which should be examined especially when we make the claim that whoever accepts Jesus as his Lord and saviour also receives the Holy Spirit.

24. θεοῦ διάκονοι

25. ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ

26. τὴν καλὴν παραθήκην φύλαξον διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου τοῦ ἐνοικοῦντος ἐν ἡμῖν.

27. εἰ ὀνειδίξεσθε ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, μακάριοι, ὅτι τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἀναπαύεται.

John 20:22

In John 20 Jesus appears on the evening of the resurrection Sunday to a group of disciples (John 20:21-23):

21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.²⁸ 23 If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld."

Does John 20:22 teach that the disciples did receive the Holy Spirit on the day of the resurrection? Should we accordingly assume that they were born again on that day and then received the power of the Holy Spirit weeks later on the day of Pentecost? Is this a proof for the teaching of a second blessing and a two level Christianity? According to my understanding not really.

When we want to understand John 20:22 we must do this within the context of the whole book of John. One very important section about the coming of the Holy Spirit (here called "the Helper") is found in John 16:5-7:

5 But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' 6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.²⁹

Here Jesus states that he first has to go to the Father ("to him who sent me") which implies that he has to leave the disciples. Of course this causes them great sadness. But the going away of Jesus is the condition

28. καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς• Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον•

29. ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τὴν ἀλήθειαν λέγω ὑμῖν, συμφέρει ὑμῖν ἵνα ἐγὼ ἀπέλθω. ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ ἀπέλθω, ὁ παράκλητος οὐ μὴ ἔλθῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς• ἐὰν δὲ πορευθῶ, πέμψω αὐτὸν πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

that the Holy Spirit can come. Without his being away there can be no presence of the Holy Spirit in them.³⁰

Now within the immediate context of John 20:22 there is another important verse which we have to combine with John 16:7. This is what Jesus says to Mary who clings to his feet³¹ (John 20:18):

“Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”³²

Here Jesus tells Mary that he has not yet gone to the Father. And of course he has not yet left the disciples either. But this is the condition of the coming of the Helper, the Holy Spirit. Even in the rest of John 20 and 21 Jesus has not yet left the disciples. He still meets with them as Luke tells us for about 40 days (Acts 1:30). John does not mention the 40 days, but even he presupposes a time span of several weeks (John 20:1.19.26; 21:1). Therefore when we combine John 16:7 with 20:17 we must conclude that the Holy Spirit was not really received yet in John 20:19-23. But how can we then understand what is meant by this section?

I understand John 20:22 as an acted parable pointing to Pentecost and showing the disciples that after Jesus has gone to the Father (John 16:7; 20:17) he will on the feast of Pentecost breathe the Holy Spirit into them thus making them a new creation and a new mankind.

The key for this understanding is the word used for "he breathed on them"³³. The same word even in the exact same verb form is used in the standard Greek translation of Gen 2:7 which was in use in the first

30. Compare Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 847 note 56.

31. Compare Mt 28:1.9.

32. λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς• Μὴ μου ἅπτου, οὐπω γὰρ ἀναβέβηκα πρὸς τὸν πατέρα• πορεύου δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου καὶ εἰπὲ αὐτοῖς• Ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν καὶ θεὸν μου καὶ θεὸν ὑμῶν.

33. ἐνεφύσησεν ἐνῆφυσῆσεν

century, the Septuagint³⁴:

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

In 1 Kgs 17:21, according to the LXX³⁵, Elijah thrice breathes into the dead son of the widow and asks God to let his soul return into his body which then happens.

In Ez 37, the chapter of the resurrection of Israel, we find the same word in verse 9 (LXX) for the breathing of the wind/spirit on the restored bodies of the vast dead army so that they may become alive again (Ez 37:9-14). The wind or spirit of 37:9 is explained to be the Spirit of God in 37:14.

On the backdrop of Gn 2:7 this passage in Ezekiel presents the restoration of Israel as its resurrection and recreation. Ez 37 is a close parallel to John 20 with the idea of resurrection and of the imparting of God's Spirit in both. Jesus seems to have acted in a way to combine both Gn 2:7 and Ez 37:9 in their relative contexts to teach the disciples a lesson in an acted parable.

By breathing on the disciples and saying that they should receive the Holy Spirit Jesus teaches something about the receiving of the Holy Spirit. This is similar to what he did in John 13:1-17 where he taught through an acted parable something about cleansing and forgiveness of sins. Of course Jesus wanted to point to the cleansing through his blood which he was going to shed on the cross (John 1:29; 6:51-53; 1 John 1:9). The water in the basin was only part of the acted parable not having itself the power to cleanse Peter from his sins. The message of this powerful parable is that we must let Jesus cleanse us from our sins.

So what does Jesus teach us in John 20:22? He breathed on the disciples. The breath of his body in this acted parable can be compared

34. και επλασεν ο θεος τον ανθρωπον χουν απο της γης και ενεφυσησεν εις το προσωπον αυτου πνοην ζωης και εγενετο ο ανθρωπος εις ψυχην ζωσαν

35. και ενεφυσησεν τω παιδαριω τρις και επεκαλεσατο τον κυριον και ειπεν κυριε ο θεος μου επιστραφητω δη η ψυχη του παιδαριου τουτου εις αυτον

to the water in the basin of the other acted parable in John 13. His breath symbolizes the Holy Spirit as he himself explains: "Receive the Holy Spirit." His bodily breath is not identical with the Holy Spirit as the water in his basin was not identical with his blood. What Jesus wants to teach the disciples in this symbolic action is that he himself is acting as the creator who breathed life into Adam in Gen 2:7.

As God created the first man starting with Adam, so the risen Christ has become a life-giving spirit. He is the first of the new mankind. He has the power to raise the spiritual dead and make them a new creation³⁶ (compare 1 Cor 15:45; 1 Pet 1:3; 2 Cor 5:17). At the time of John 20:22 this can be only an acted parable because the Holy Spirit would come when Jesus was gone to the Father. When the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost the disciples would remember that Jesus in his divinity is breathing the Spirit into them.

That this is what was meant gets further support from the context. Jesus had shown himself to be God the creator. One disciple was missing, Thomas. He refused to accept the stories of his colleagues. He had one week to contemplate their content. When Jesus appeared to him, he immediately confessed: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). When he realized that their story was true, he knew that Jesus was not only a risen man, but the living God and the creator.

Acts 2:1ff

The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost started a new era. We have seen that the Holy Spirit was at work in the time of the Old Testament and in the life of John the Baptist and of course very much in the ministry of Jesus Christ. But still it is important to say that the feast of Pentecost in Acts 2 ushered in a new era, the era of the Holy Spirit, the time when God's Spirit is poured out on "all flesh" (meaning all Israelites, and further on all mankind, all nations; Acts 2:16-18):

16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

17 "'And in the last days it shall be, God declares,

36. So with Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, p. 846, note 53.

that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
18 even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit,
and they shall prophesy.

Since this day God's gift of the Holy Spirit is not only for people in special chosen offices, as for the anointed high priest, the king or for prophets. It is for all, the young and the old, men and women, people who are near (Israelites) and people who are far (the Gentiles to the ends of the earth; see Acts 2:39; 1:8).

Acts 8:12-17

Together with Acts 19:1-7 this is often taken as a proof text that there can be real Christians who have not received the Holy Spirit. Let us have look at this text:

12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. 14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

The argument runs like this: The Samaritans had heard the Gospel, believed it, even had been baptized, but still had not received the Holy

Spirit (8:16). They received the Spirit later through the apostles (8:17). Therefore today it is also possible that people hear the Gospel, accept Christ as their Saviour, get baptized and still do not have the Holy Spirit until God uses some spirit-filled person to help them receive the Spirit.

But whoever argues like this has overlooked the special and unique situation of the Samaritans in Acts 8. It was the first time that the Gospel came to Samaria, and this situation will never be repeated. It was and stays unique. It is not an example for us today. It was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus in Acts 1:8:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The apostles had been witnesses for Jesus in Jerusalem and Judah during the time of Acts 2-7. Now in Acts 8 Samaria is reached with the Gospel. In Acts 10 the Gentiles will be reached, and the whole way to the ends of the earth is opened up before the church.

Acts 8 was a unique time of transition. The Gospel was on its way from the Jews to the Samaritans and then to the Gentiles. The Samaritans were a group in between. They were neither real Jews or Israelites, nor were they real Gentiles. They were in between. They had the law of Moses, but a Samaritan version. They had the circumcision, but they rejected the temple in Jerusalem (see John 4:20-22).

God honored their special status by bringing the Gospel first to them in Acts 8 and then opening the door for the Gentiles in Acts 10 (see 11:18). But God also knew of the enormous hatred between Jews and Samaritans. We get an impression of this in John 4:9:

The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

The woman here was totally surprised. She thought a Jew would prefer to stay tired and thirsty, perhaps even die from thirst rather than ask for a bit of water from a Samaritan woman. In church history we learn that

the schisms in the church are often related to issues of honor, power, culture, and nation.

God wanted to have a united worldwide church "to the ends of the earth" built "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph 2:20). Therefore God did something special in Acts 8:12-17. He humbled the Samaritans under the authority of the apostles Peter and John.

The apostles had to come down to them from Jerusalem (!) and had to pray for them so that they would be incorporated into the worldwide church by receiving the Holy Spirit.³⁷ This was very special and is not repeated today. Today the biblical principle is stated in Rom 8:9: "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." To belong to Christ and to have his Spirit is one and the same. There is no being a true Christian without having the Spirit of Christ.

Acts 10:1ff

The people of the household of Cornelius receive the Spirit in Acts 10. The Holy spirit fell on those who were listening with faith to Peter's sermon (Acts 10:44; 11:15). After they received the spirit (10:47) Peter ordered them to also be baptized with water. The fact that God gave them the Spirit was a witness that God had accepted them after having purified their hearts through faith (15:8-9).

Please, note the different way God was dealing with the Samaritans in Acts 8 and the Gentiles in Acts 10 according to the dangers of the respective situation. The Samaritans were in danger of despising the Jewish apostles from Jerusalem, so God humbled them under the authority of the apostles.

But in Acts 10 the situation is totally different. The problem is not with the Gentiles, but with the Jews. They were in danger of never accepting any Gentile, not even eating with them. So the Jew, Peter, needed special preparation through three visions from God to even go

37. So with D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit. A theological exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989), p. 145.

to the house of Cornelius (10:9-20).

When Peter was preaching, God did not even let him finish his preaching (11:15) but sent the Holy Spirit on the believing Gentiles as soon as they had heard that there is forgiveness of sins through the crucified and risen Christ (10:39-44). They received the Holy Spirit even before they were baptized with water (10:47)!

It is significant that Peter had an important role in all three stages of Acts 1:8 (1. Jerusalem and Judea: Acts 2; 2. Samaria: Acts 8, and 3. to the ends of the earth: Acts 10). God used the apostle Peter to open the door for each next step of spreading the Gospel. Peter had the keys to open the door (Acts 11:18; Mt 16:19).

Acts 19:1-7

In this passage there are about 12 men in Ephesus who were disciples but did not have the Holy Spirit. Together with Acts 8:12-17 this is the most important "proof text" for those who think that there are true Christians without the Holy Spirit.

Let us have a closer look at this text step by step:

1 And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. 2 And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."³⁸

What we can see is that this group of men are called "disciples". It is not immediately clear whose disciples they were. Within the four Gospels we know of disciples of John the Baptist and of disciples of Jesus (see Matthew 9:14). In the immediate context of Acts we have the interesting statement about Apollos who visited Ephesus before (Acts 18:24-25):

38. εἰπὲν τε πρὸς αὐτούς• Εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐλάβετε πιστεῦσαντες; οἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτόν• Ἄλλ οὐδ εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἔστιν ἠκούσαμεν.

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Apollos would have been an example of a disciple of John (knowing and acknowledging his baptism) who at the same time teaches accurately about Jesus, that he is the Christ (Acts 18:25,28). So he was also a kind of disciple of Christ and Christ's teaching. But at the same time his knowledge was limited and Priscilla and Aquila had to help him (18:26).

Whether Apollos had had an impact on these twelve men or not, we do not know for sure. But Paul was wondering what kind of disciples they were, because he sensed that they perhaps were without the Holy Spirit. After asking them he got the answer that they did not know that the Spirit had already come. Having confirmed this it is interesting to note his next question (19:3):

And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism."

Before Jesus went into heaven he commanded the apostles (Matthew 28:19):

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.³⁹

Paul recognized immediately that they could not have received the Christian baptism "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". Otherwise they would have known that the Holy Spirit was there and the Holy Spirit would be in them.

The problem of these disciples was a lack of teaching and a lack of knowledge of salvation. We can use the Gospel of Matthew to illustrate

39. πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος,

this. They knew about the baptism of John which we find in Matthew 3. So according to their knowledge they are somewhere after Matthew 3.

But they do not know the baptism "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" which we find in Matthew 28 commanded by the risen Christ. This puts them according to their knowledge some time before Matthew 28. So it is clear that they do not know the teaching of the risen Christ after he had died on the cross.

But it was the risen Christ who had explained the meaning of his death on the cross (Luke 24:45-47; Acts 1:3). So if they do not know one part of the teaching of the risen Christ (baptism in the name of the triune God) of course they would not know other parts (like forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Christ). But without knowing these facts and having faith in them, forgiveness of our sins is impossible and the cleansing of our heart is impossible. And surely it is impossible to receive the Spirit into an unclean heart (Acts 15:8-9).

These men were, spiritually speaking, living even before the cross of Christ. Paul only had to teach them and lead them further (Acts 19:4-7):

4 And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.⁴⁰ 7 There were about twelve men in all.

It seems that they immediately accepted Paul's teaching and reached with his help the new age of the Holy Spirit. They are no proof for the idea that there are real Christians without the Holy Spirit. They are more like disciples of John the Baptist, still waiting for the Messiah. When Paul preached the Messiah Jesus and they accepted him and the baptism in his name, they could receive the Holy Spirit.

40. καὶ ἐπιθέντος αὐτοῖς τοῦ Παύλου χειρὰς ἦλθε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ' αὐτούς, ἐλάλουν τε γλώσσαις καὶ ἐπροφήτευον.

Summing up, we can say that even Acts 19:1-7 does not teach, on closer look, that there can be real Christians without the Holy Spirit. If somebody has received Christ as the one who died for him and rose from the dead and is now Lord in heaven at the right hand of God, he will have received the Holy Spirit. This happens according to God's promises (John 1:12-13; 3:5.16). Therefore we can say: Whoever accepts Jesus as his Lord and Saviour also receives the Holy Spirit.

14.2.4 God's Spirit Is the Instructor and Guide for God's People.

He has inspired the Old Testament prophets and scriptures.

The tabernacle and its rules were given by the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9:8). David was inspired by the Holy Spirit (Mt 22:43-44; Mk 12:36; Acts 1:16.20; Ps 69:25; 109:8; Acts 4:18.25; Ps 2:1-2; Heb 3:7-11; 4,7; Psalm 95:7-11).

Joel 2:28-32 is quoted in Acts 2:16-21 and Joel is called a prophet. Isaiah (6:9-10) is quoted by Paul in Acts 28:25 as a statement of the Holy Spirit. In Heb 10:15-17 the writer points to Jer 31:33-34 saying that the Holy Spirit bears witness through these words.

The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets (1 Peter 1:10-11). The way I understand 1 Peter 3:19f is that the Spirit of Christ was also in Noah and preaching through Noah to the generation of the flood (1 Peter 3:19f).

The prophets of the Old Testament have prophesied under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

He teaches the church all the words of Jesus.

He teaches the church all of Jesus' words and reminds the church of them (John 14:26)

He guides the church into the whole truth.

When Jesus was about to leave the disciples and go to the Father in heaven, he taught this as part of the last preparation of the disciples (John 16:13; see

also 1 Cor 2:10-13).

He teaches the church about future things.

It is interesting that John, who received the Revelation about future things (Rev 1:1; 4:1), gives us also this teaching of Jesus in John 16:13; see also 1 Tim 4:1.

God's Spirit and the Jerusalem Council solved a problem.

God's Spirit and the Jerusalem Council solved a problem of what to do with gentile converts (Acts 15:28-29).

14.2.5 God's Spirit Empowers People for Certain Tasks.

The Holy Spirit and the prophet John the Baptist

John was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). John grew up being strengthened by the Spirit (Luke 1:80, or in his spirit?; see also Luke 2:40; 1 Cor 16:13 and Eph 3:16).

The gifts of the Holy Spirit and His fruit

Gifts of the Spirit are given by the Spirit to every believer and are revelations of the work of the Spirit in the Church to edify the Church.

The whole of 1 Cor 12 teaches this,⁴¹ but let us especially hear 12:4-7:

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.⁴²

41. Compare also Rom 12:3ff and Eph 4:11.

42. 4 Διαρέσεις δὲ χαρισμάτων εἰσὶν, τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα• 5 καὶ διαρέσεις διακονιῶν εἰσὶν, καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς κύριος• 6 καὶ διαρέσεις ἐνεργημάτων εἰσὶν, ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς θεός, ὁ ἐνεργῶν τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν. 7 ἑκάστῳ δὲ δίδεται ἡ φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον.

Apostles The word "apostle" (hō apōstōlōs)⁴³ denotes somebody who is sent with authority on a mission representing the sender (Matthew 10:5.40). The apostles had prime importance. In the following two lists they are mentioned first (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11).

They were eyewitnesses of the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor 9:1). As such they were part of the foundation of the worldwide church (Eph 2:19-21). It is possible that Paul thinks of one group when he speaks of the "foundation of the apostles and prophets" because he uses only one definite article for apostles and prophets.

He himself had both gifts (being an apostle and prophet, see Acts 13:1; 14:14). The same is true for Peter (Acts 5:1-11). Because the apostles were eyewitnesses of the risen Jesus, I think that this gift was limited to the first century, to the time when God was laying the foundation of the worldwide church.⁴⁴

Prophets

Prophecy is a gift of the Spirit in the New Testament. A prophet (hō prōphētēs)⁴⁵ is somebody who, inspired by God, speaks truthfully about the past, the present, or the future. In 1 Cor 14:3 Paul tells us about the effect of prophecy within the church:

On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.⁴⁶

Sometimes these days this is turned around and people say: If somebody speaks in an "upbuilding, encouraging, and consoling way," this is prophecy. But that is not the case. Prophecy even in 1 Cor 14 is speaking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in a way that could not be done without this guidance. See 14:24-25 for proof of this:

43. ὁ ἀπόστολος

44. So with Carson, *Showing the Spirit*. A theological exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14, p. 182, note 78.

45. ὁ προφήτης

46. ὁ δὲ προφητεῦν ἄνθρωποις λαλεῖ οἰκοδομὴν καὶ παράκλησιν καὶ παραμυθίαν.

24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

This outsider experiences that "the secrets of his heart are disclosed," secrets only God can know. So he draws the conclusion: "God is really among you." To put it in another way: a normal sermon may have the effect of bringing "upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" to the church, but this does not make the sermon prophetic. The gift of prophecy includes an element of special guidance of the Spirit while speaking and prophesying.

This can be verified by examples in the New Testament. Have a look at Zechariah. His words given in Luke 1:68-79 are called prophetic in Luke 1:67. He is speaking of the service of his son John the Baptist who is going to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. Both chosen servants are an expression of God's mercy and faithfulness towards Israel. Zechariah predicts the future of both.

Agabus was a famous prophet of the first generation (Acts 11:27-29). Again we can see an element of prediction, a superhuman knowledge, given to Agabus by God. Another interesting element is the answer of the believers. Knowing that God has a purpose for every prophecy they ask what they should do. After examining the prophecy they decide to help the brothers and sisters in Judea with a gift of money sent to them to help the poor with the coming inflation.

The same Agabus foretells the imprisonment of Paul in Acts 21:10-12 using Paul's belt. Again there is a superhuman source of knowledge in Agabus. And the others have to react to the prophecy. Paul's friends urge him not to go to Jerusalem, but Paul remains determined to go (21:13). Paul was actually warned several times (Acts 20:22-23; 21:4).

For further occurrences of this gift see 1 Cor 12:10, 28, 29; 1 Cor 14; Rom 12:7.) Through the quotation of Joel in Acts 2:17 we learn that prophecy will be a gift of God's Spirit for the last days before the coming of the day of the Lord.

A special prophetic book in the New Testament is the book of Revelation. In the introduction the book is marked as prophetic (Rv 1:3; see also 1:10; 4:2; 2:7.11.17.29; 3:6.13.22; 14:13; 19:10; 22:6; 22:17).

Evangelists An Evangelist (hō ēuaggēlistēs)⁴⁷ is somebody who delivers a good message, good news, having been sent and authorized to do so. The gift of the Evangelist seems also to be important, being named immediately after apostles and prophets in Eph 4:11.

In comparison with the pastors and teachers (here one group with one definite article) who are responsible for the "sheep" of one area, the three groups of the apostles, the prophets and the evangelists are seen moving around in the New Testament and serving beyond one town or one single area.

Philip is called an evangelist in Acts 21:9, probably to distinguish him from the apostle of the same name. And Paul writes to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:5):

As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

These are the three times the noun is used in the New Testament. The verb is used more often, and not only for people who have the title of being an evangelist, but also for the scattered believers evangelizing (Acts 8:4) and for apostles doing this (Acts 5:42; Paul 13:32 etc.). In the Gospels angels evangelize (Luke 1:19; 2:10), John the Baptist (Luke 3:18) and of course Jesus Christ (Luke 4:18.43 e. a.).

Shepherds (Pastors) and Teachers We have already seen that the shepherds (hō pōimēn in the singular)⁴⁸ and teachers have one definite article in Eph 4:11.⁴⁹ It is one group of persons with a double gift, therefore

47. ὁ εὐαγγελιστής

48. ὁ ποιμήν

49. καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους,

here counted separately, but see also the words "Teacher" and "Leadership" (compare the Prophets and Teachers in Acts 13:1).

When we look at all texts of the New Testament, it seems that the group of the pastor-shepherds (Eph 4:11; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2) is one and the same as the group of elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tim 5:1.17.19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Pt 5:1.5), or of overseers (Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1.2; Titus 1:7; 1 Pt 2:25; 5:2), or of those "standing in front" which means of those "who rule" (1 Tim 5:17⁵⁰; compare Rom 12:8; 1 Thes 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:4-5.12).

Leadership The Holy Spirit is also working to give the church good leadership (1 Cor 12:28):

And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

Here we talk about "administrating". The word used *kybērnēsēis*⁵¹ means "government" or "administrations". In Acts 27:11 and Rv 18:17 there is a related noun⁵² *kybēnētēs* for the "pilot" or "shipmaster" of a ship. As the pilot or shipmaster decides the course the ship takes, so the people with the gift of "kyberneseis" decide under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the course of the church. Of course apostles, prophets, and shepherds are leaders as well.

Teachers In the New Testament the word teacher (*hō didaskalōs*)⁵³ is most often used for Jesus (e. g. Mt 8:19; 12:38; 19:16; 22:16.24.36). Friends and enemies talked to him like this.

Some texts talk of teachers as a gift of God for the church (1 Cor 12:28.29):

50. Οἱ καλῶς προεστῶτες πρεσβύτεροι

51. κυβερνήσεις

52. κυβερνήτης

53. ὁ διδάσκαλος

28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?

The answer to the questions of verse 29 is, of course, "No!" Not all can be spirit-gifted teachers. In Eph 4:11 the gift of the teacher is combined with the pastoral gift of the shepherd indicated by the one definite article in front of the pastors and teachers.

In Acts 13:1 the gift of the teacher is combined with the prophetic gift. Paul understands himself as a teacher of the Gentiles and combines this with his being an apostle (1 Tm 2:7; 2 Tm 1:11). When Christians develop well they should, after some time, become mature enough to be teachers (Heb 5:12). But they should not push themselves too soon in that direction (James 3:1).

Gift of healing Paul mentions this gift in his list in 1 Cor 12:8-9:

8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit.⁵⁴

Later, in the same chapter, Paul wants to show that there is unity in the body of Christ despite the diversity in the gifts (1 Cor 12:28-30) and mentions the gifts of healing again.

The rhetorical questions of 12:29-30 all expect the answer: "No!" Every gift of course has a strong impact on the gifted person and makes him different from the people with the other gifts. Every one is special and different by the design of God for the good of the whole body of Christ, the church of God. The gift of healing reveals God's mercy towards the weak and ill and God's power to help.

54. 8 ὃ μὲν γὰρ διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος δίδεται λόγος σοφίας, ἄλλω δὲ λόγος γνώσεως κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα, 9 ἑτέρῳ πίστις ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι, ἄλλω χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ πνεύματι,

Gift of performing wonders or mighty deeds In the above quoted texts we have also "miracles" or "mighty deeds" (1 Cor 12:10: ἐνέργημα δυναμῶν)⁵⁵; 12:28,29: δυνάμεις⁵⁶). See also Mark 6:5-6: These miracles seem to be the kind of deeds which can only be done by the power of God. It also seems to be the case that God wants them to be done in an atmosphere of faith.

Gift of faith Paul speaks of the gift of faith (ἡ πίστις)⁵⁷ in 1 Cor 12:8-9:

8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit.⁵⁸

We know that every Christian needs faith to be a true Christian. There are certain truths which Christians believe and there is a basic attitude of trust towards God as father and saviour. But the faith Paul speaks about here, seems to be special. It is not the common faith Christians have, but a special faith for a special occasion; for a special challenge. He mentions the same gift again in the next chapter, the great chapter about the gift of love (13:2). The challenges here are "mountains" which are removed by the gift of faith.

It is a comfort to know that God is able to give this gift to somebody amongst his people, when it is needed most and when there are great challenges for his church; mountains which hinder the progress of the church and which block the way (see also 2 Cor 4:11-14 about faith in the context of suffering for Christ).

55. ἐνέργηματα δυνάμεων

56. δυνάμεις

57. ἡ πίστις

58. 8 ὃ μὲν γὰρ διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος δίδεται λόγος σοφίας, ἄλλω δὲ λόγος γνώσεως κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα, 9 ἑτέρω πίστις ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι, ἄλλω χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ πνεύματι

Speaking a foreign language you have not learned. When Paul says that to some "various kinds of tongues" (gēnē glōssōn)⁵⁹ (1 Cor 12:10.28) are given. He means "various languages" because the word "tongue" was used for languages. That existing languages are meant with the word tongues, is especially clear in Acts 2:3-4 which is the first time this gift is seen in action:

3 And divided tongues (glōssai)⁶⁰ as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (glōs-sais)⁶¹ as the Spirit gave them utterance.⁶²

That the "tongues" are languages is clear because of the following verses 2:5-11 (see also Acts 10:46; 19:6).

It is possible to understand the "new tongues" of Mark 16:17-18 in a similar way. "New tongue" here would mean new for the speaker, the person who received the gift. Not necessarily "new" for the world, the others, the people who hear him speaking. This makes more sense together with the other signs (casting out demons Acts 16:18; 19:12; surviving lethal serpents Acts 28:3-6; surviving deadly poison; healing Acts 28:8-10), if the language was not new to the hearers but their own language as in Acts 2. There it would be an impressive sign: How can he speak my language, when he has never learned it? See Acts 2:7-8.

Let us now turn to 1 Corinthians 12-14 because that is the section where the phrase "(speaking in) tongues" is used most often. Having said that God has given the gift of "various kinds of tongues" (12:10.28) together with other gifts to the church Paul asks (1 Cor 12:29-30):

29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

59. γένη γλωσσῶν

60. γλώσσαι

61. γλώσσαις

62. 3 καὶ ὤφθησαν αὐτοῖς διαμεριζόμεναι γλώσσαι ὡσεὶ πυρός, καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἕνα ἕκαστον αὐτῶν, 4 καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν πάντες πνεύματος ἁγίου, καὶ ἤρξαντο λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαις καθὼς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐδίδου ἀποφθέγγεσθαι αὐτοῖς.

As we have said before, these questions are rhetorical questions expecting the emphatic answer "No!". Paul therefore clearly teaches that the gift of tongues is one of many gifts but not one gift for all. Those who claim that this special gift is given to all real believers can not prove this from the Bible. Therefore it would be better not to put forward such a claim.

Because if we say "All should have this gift!" and so put pressure on those who do not have it, we lead them into temptation. They might be tempted, if they do not get it from God, to get an imitation of the real gift. They might try to copy others, who claim to have the gift, by repeating the syllables they use or the style they speak. And so, even a chain reaction of imitations might be started with no real spiritual profit for anybody. We should stop this by simply admitting that it is one possible spiritual gift from God, but not the one gift for everybody.

Are there signs that Paul also thinks of "speaking in tongues" as "speaking in languages"? Yes, definitely. The gift of interpretation of tongues (1 Cor 12:10.30; see below) implies that "tongues" mean something which can be interpreted.

Having Acts 2 in mind, knowing that Luke and Paul were part of the same team (Acts 16:10-16; 20:5ff; 27:1ff), the nearest assumption is that what has meaning and can be interpreted, is a language. Paul's next statement in 1 Cor 13:1 also points in this direction:

If I speak in the tongues (glōssais)⁶³ of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

The "tongues of men" here are definitely human languages. Since Gen 11 we as humans have not only one language but many according to the Bible. We do not know about the language or languages of the angels. Because they had nothing like the tower of Babylon perhaps they have only one "language". If God wanted them to have more, they have more. We just do not know. But the "tongues of men" point to human languages. The same understanding of the tongues as languages fits the rest of Paul's argument in 1 Cor 14 (verses: 2;4;5;6;9;13;14;18;19;22;23;26;27;39).

63. γλώσσαις

Sometimes nowadays people understand 1 Cor 13:8-13 as a prophecy of Paul that "speaking in tongues" would cease after the completion of the canon of the New Testament (understood to be the "perfect" of 13:10). Let us have a look at this text within the context:

8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Within the context Paul's main emphasis in 1 Cor 13 is on love as the superior gift (see 12:31 introducing this superior way). He has put this chapter 13 in the center of his exposition on the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Cor 12-14 because he wants to show the Corinthians that the gifts are not as important as the way we use them and that we should use them in love.

Without love, every other gift is useless (13:1-3). Love is the perfection of a holy life and includes such great gifts as faith and hope (13:4-7; for faith and hope see 13:7). Love never ends and is, among the eternal triplet of faith, hope and love, the greatest gift (13:8-13).

It is in this context of the eternal superiority of love that Paul speaks of gifts which will end (prophecies, speaking in tongues and knowledge, see 13:8-10). But the question is when do the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge cease to exist? The answer is given in 13:10-12:

- a. When the perfect comes (13:10).
- b. When I know fully as I am fully known (13:12).

Paul compares the "partial knowledge" and the "full knowledge" with childhood and adulthood (13:11) and with looking at something through a mirror or looking directly at the real thing, seeing face to face (13:12). I think the passive in the last part of 13:12 is a divine passive:

... then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Paul has been fully known by God. God knows him fully and totally, everything about him. And God loves him even with this full knowledge. When the perfect comes, then Paul will know God as fully as God knows him today. This is not the completion of the Canon of the New Testament. This can only be the coming of Christ when we will be transformed into our eternal state of blessedness (Phil 3:20-21; 1 Jn 3:1-2).

Till Christ comes back, we will need all the gifts God is willing to give us. We will need all the help we can get from Him and we should despise no true gift of God. It is in this attitude that Paul gives rules to use the gift of prophecy, the gift of tongues and other gifts in 1 Cor 14:26-32. The rules for speaking in tongues include:

1. No public speaking of tongues in church is allowed without interpretation (14:28).
2. Only two or at most three are allowed to speak in tongues publicly in one service and not at the same time but one after the other (14:27).

Similar rules apply to the prophets: "Let two or three prophets speak." The prophets speak in the local language so they do not need an interpretation, but they must be understood as well: "Let the others weigh what is said."

Paul puts a great deal of emphasis on the fact that using the spiritual gifts must make sense to the church. The gift of revelation seems to get an immediate green light in comparison to the speaking of the prophets showing that the revelation is more urgent. The speaking prophet can stop and let God give his revelation to the church (14:30).

In 1 Cor 14:1-25 Paul also compares the gift of prophecy and the gift of speaking in tongues with regard to their usefulness for the church. The bottom line of his argument is that it must make sense. Therefore he prefers the gift of prophecy to the speaking in tongues in the public service (14:19), and he encourages the person who speaks in tongues to pray for the gift of interpretation (14:11-13). As a result he will profit personally in his spiritual life (14:14-15) and be able to let the church participate in the blessings of this gift through understanding (14:16-17,27).

1 Cor 14:14 tells us something important about the nature of the gift of tongues:

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful.⁶⁴

Please note that it is "my spirit" who prays, not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit only provides the language to pray in, but it is "my spirit" who does the prayer. Sometimes people say that speaking in tongues is so good because it is the prayer language of the Holy Spirit, and they combine it with the "groanings which cannot be uttered" (stēnagmōis alalētōis)⁶⁵ from Rom 8:26⁶⁶. But this does not fit,⁶⁷ because here in 1 Cor 14 the speaking in tongues is a kind of "uttering" (lalēin)⁶⁸, and there in Rom 8:26 the praying is without uttering (alalētōis).

Interpretation of speaking in a foreign language ("in tongues"). When Paul says (1 Cor 14:14),

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful.

he shows us that these prayers of the human spirit are happening in an area of the person which is "deeper" or "higher" than what is going on in the conscious mind of the person. Only if the person receives the gift of interpretation of the praying in tongues, the two areas get connected and his conscious mind starts to be fruitful (14:13):

Therefore one who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret (hina dihērmēnēuē).⁶⁹

64. ἐὰν γὰρ προσεύχωμαι γλώσση, τὸ πνεῦμά μου προσεύχεται, ὁ δὲ νοῦς μου ἄκαρπός ἐστιν.

65. στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις

66. KJV, The Holy Bible - King James Version

67. Compare Grudem, Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine S.1078-1080 who also argues that Rom 8:26-27 do not speak about the gift of tongues.

68. λαλεῖν

69. Διὸ ὁ λαλῶν γλώσση προσευχέσθω ἵνα διερμηνεύῃ.

As we have seen above, this gift of interpretation is important for the personal life of the believer and even more so for the public services of the church (1 Cor 14:26-28).

The interpretation of the speaking in tongues is so important for Paul that he does not allow any speaking in tongues in public without interpretation. Positively the interpretation makes the speaking in tongues edifying for the church (14:5). That will be the reason why Paul mentions "the interpretation of tongues" (*hěmēñěia glōssōn*)⁷⁰ straight after the "various kinds of tongues" in 12:10 and that he also pairs the two gifts in 12:30.

This verb "interpret" is used twice in the New Testament without the context of speaking in tongues. In the first passage the risen Christ explains the Old Testament prophecies about himself to two disciples on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24:27). In the second it is about the translation of a name from one language to another (Acts 9:36). This verse in Acts 9:36 shows that this verb can be used for the translation from one human language into another. I think that this is what Paul also means with the gift of interpretation of tongues.

Nowadays it is possible to record spoken language on a voice recorder, for example an mp3 player or a smart phone. If somebody is speaking in tongues, his speech can be recorded. Then it is possible to play this recorded speech to two or three people who claim to have the gift of interpretation. They can give their interpretation which also can be recorded. When the interpretation of the two or three interpreters agrees (Dt 19:15) with regard to the content of the message, we can really know the content of what was said. If we know the content of the speech in tongues, then we can evaluate whether it honors God and Jesus Christ and is spiritual or not (1 Cor 12:3).

Dreams from God On the day of Pentecost Peter tries to explain the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in his sermon and he says (Acts 2:16-17):

16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:
 17 "And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
 that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,

70. ἑρμηνεία γλωσσῶν

and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
 and your young men shall see visions,
 and your old men shall dream dreams
 (enypniōis enypniasthēsōntai).⁷¹

According to the prophecy of Joel and its fulfillment "in the last days" we may expect that God will use dreams to speak to people. It seems that this is especially happening to bring the Gospel to unreached people. The same is true with regard to the next gift.

Visions The same text as before is important for this gift as well (Acts 2:17 *horasēis ōpsōntai*)⁷². The difference between an inspired dream and a vision is that the dream happens while somebody is sleeping while this is not necessarily the case with a vision. A vision can happen while somebody is awake (compare Acts 9:10.12; 10:3; 11:5; 12:9; 16:9; 18:9). God uses visions in Acts to lead his people again and again as these texts show.

Revelations Paul mentions in 1 Cor 14:30 the gift of revelation in this way:

If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent.⁷³

The verb used for "a revelation is made" is in the passive voice (*apōkalyphthē*). This seems to be a divine passive meaning the hidden subject, the revealer is God himself. When God wants to reveal something to somebody, this is more urgent than the practicing of the other gifts like prophecy, speaking in tongues or interpreting tongues.

To understand this gift we must look at the use of the relevant words in the New Testament. When the verb "to reveal" is used in the active voice, sometimes "God" is the subject, the revealer (1 Cor 2:10; Phil 3:15), sometimes "God the Father" (Mt 11:25; 16:17; Lk 10:21; Gal 1:16), and sometimes "the Son" (Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22). When this verb is used in the passive

71. καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ὑμῶν ἐνυπνίοις ἐνυπνιασθήσονται.

72. καὶ οἱ νεανίσκοι ὑμῶν ὁράσεις ὄψονται

73. ἐὰν δὲ ἄλλῳ ἀποκαλυφθῇ καθημένῳ, ὁ πρῶτος σιγάτω.

voice (something is revealed), it seems that this is always a divine passive meaning that the hidden agent, the revealer, is divine.

The things which are revealed are the thoughts of many hearts (Lk 2:35), all covered things (Mt 10:26; Lk 12:2), Christ (Lk 17:30), the arm of the Lord (John 12:38), the righteousness of God (Rom 1:17), the wrath of God (Rom 1:18), the future glory (Rom 8:18; 1 Pt 5:1), every man's work (1 Cor 3:13), anything (1 Cor 14:30), faith (Gal 3:23), the mystery of Christ (Eph 3:5), the man of lawlessness, the lawless one (2 Thes 2:3.6.8), salvation (1 Pt 1:5), and that the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies will happen after the lifetime of the prophets (1 Pt 1:12).

The opposite of revealing is "to hide" something, "to cover" it. To reveal is to uncover something which was hidden before, to show it in its true significance, to reveal the true nature of something.

In the following verses the noun "revelation" (apōkálypsis) is used in the Greek. The idea is that there is an act of revelation where someone reveals something. Christ is the means of revelation in Lk 2:32, a light for revelation to the Gentiles⁷⁴. In Rom 2:5 God's righteous judgment is revealed, in Rom 8:19 the children of God and in Rom 16:25 a divine mystery. In I Cor 14:6 Paul speaks through the gift of revelation and in I Cor 14:26 somebody with the gift may speak like this in a church service. In 2 Cor 12:1 Paul speaks of revelations he has received in third heaven and in paradise. In Gal 1:12 and Eph 3:3 he claims that he received his gospel through a special revelation of Jesus Christ. In Gal 2:2 a revelation guided him to go with Barnabas and Titus to Jerusalem to talk about his gospel. In Eph 1:17 the Holy Spirit is called "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation". The "revelation of Jesus Christ" in 1 Pt 1:7.13 and 1 Cor 1:7 means his revelation at the time of his coming back again.

If the phrase "the revelation of Jesus Christ" in Rv 1:1 is a subjective genitive then it means that Jesus is revealing everything in this book, he is the revealer behind the book. If it is an objective genitive then it means that this book is revealing Jesus Christ, his glory, his divinity, his divine power. Both would fit the content of the book. Perhaps both are intended. In the light of the content of Rv 1:1 I would prefer the subjective genitive.

74. ὥς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν

Gifts of ministry or service Paul speaks in Rom 12:6-7 of different gifts:

6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving;⁷⁵ the one who teaches, in his teaching.

His idea seems to be that every gift belongs to an area where it should be used. The gift of service leads the person who receives it into a life of serving others. The word service (*diakōnia*) is used for a whole range of activities in the New Testament. Some passages speak of a gift of serving without specifying it: Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:5; Ephesians 4:12; Col 4:17 (Archippus); 2 Tm 4:11 (Mark); Rv 2:19 (the angel of the church in Thyatira) . Sometimes it is a service to provide the things needed for life, for eating and drinking. Therefore it can also be a collection of money to help the needy: Luke 10:40; Acts 6:1; 11:29; 12:25; Rom 15:31; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:1,12,13.

The service of an apostle is spoken of in Acts 1:17,25; 21:19; Rom 11:13; 2 Cor 11:8. The gift of an evangelist is also a service in 2 Tm 4:5 (Timothy) as is the teaching of the word of God (Acts 6:4; 20:24; 1 Cor 16:15). The service of Moses as a lawgiver which was leading to condemnation (2 Cor 3:7,9) is compared to the service of Paul as a gospel preacher leading to life (2 Cor 3:8,9; 4:1; 6:3; see also 1 Tm 1:12) and to reconciliation with God (2 Cor 5:18). In Heb 1:14 there is even a special service of the angels mentioned:

Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Gift of mentoring, encouragement, motivation, exhortation Paul continues his list of gifts in Rom 12:8 and says: "the one who exhorts" should use his gift "in his exhortation".⁷⁶ The Greek verb "*parakalēō*" translated here with "exhort" has a much wider range of meanings than "exhort". We

75. εἴτε διακονίαν ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ

76. εἴτε ὁ παρακαλῶν ἐν τῇ παρακλήσει

have seen before (??) that it can also mean "to comfort"⁷⁷ and to "challenge" or "motivate" to do something.⁷⁸ Sometimes it means "to ask" or "to request".⁷⁹ This gift is related to mentoring, encouragement, motivation, exhortation, and comfort. It is what counselors need.

Gift of giving Paul says about this gift in Rom 12:8:

... the one who contributes, in generosity ...⁸⁰

The word for "the one who contributes" is "hō mētadidōus". This verb is also used in Eph 4:28 and in the LXX translation of Proverbs 11:26.

The verb used in these three verses is used for giving material help in the context of need. The word for "in generosity" is "ēn haplōtēti" which is more literally translated "in simplicity" (KJV). It is also used in 2 Cor 1:12; 8:2; 9:11.13; 11:3; Eph 6:5; Col 3:22. Looking at the word usage in these contexts one gets the impression that it is used for a pure motivation of the heart either with regard to the style of living or especially in the context of giving in a way to reflect God's character (Luke 6:30-36). xxxx

Gift of mercy It is interesting that there is a special gift of mercy (Rom 12:8):

... the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.⁸¹

The verb used here for doing acts of mercy is most often used in the New Testament with God⁸² or Jesus Christ⁸³ as subject. When Jesus is the subject he is normally asked to have mercy, to help and heal somebody. When it is used in the passive voice it is a divine passive, meaning that the logical subject is God who has mercy on somebody.⁸⁴ Once father Abraham is

77. Mt 2:18; 5:4

78. Rom 12:1; Lk 3:18

79. Mt 8:5; 26:53

80. ὁ μεταδιδούς ἐν ἀπλότητι

81. ὁ ἐλεῶν ἐν ἡλαρότητι.

82. Mk 5:19; Rom 9:15.16.18; 11:32; Phil 2:27

83. Mt 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 20:30.31; Mk 10:47.48; Lk 17:13; 18:38.39

84. Mt 5:7; Rom 11:30.31; 1 Cor 7:25; 2 Cor 4:1; 1 Tm 1:13.16; 1 Pt 2:10

asked for mercy (Lk 16:24). A few times the subject is ordinary men (Mt 5:7; 18:33; Rom 12:8; Jude 22.23). When someone has the gift of mercy, he reflects in his acts of mercy the character of God who has compassion on mankind. According to Rom 12:8 he should do this "with cheerfulness", "with joy".

The given passages show us that mercy is a kind of love for people in need. Often God's mercy has resulted in saving people from their illnesses or even more importantly in granting them salvation. The person with the gift of mercy points to God as a God of compassion.

Gift of helping The next gift from 1 Cor 12:28 may overlap with the previous gift:

28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

The word for "helping" (ESV) or "helps" (KJV) is used in the plural (antilēmpsēis)⁸⁵ pointing to the different actions of helping others. It is only used here in the New Testament. A related verb (antilambanōmai)⁸⁶ is used in the sense of "to help" in Lk 1:54; Acts 20:35 and 1 Tm 6:2. This gift might be similar to the gift of mercy because in both cases you help needy people. The name of the gift of mercy gives the motive (compassionate love) while the gift of helping just points to the result that you help people. In Mary's praise in Lk 1:54 we find both nicely put together (see also Lk 10:40 and Rom 8:26).

Discernment of spirits The gift of the discernment of spirits is only mentioned in 1 Cor 12:10:

... to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy,
to another the ability to distinguish between spirits (diakrisēis)

85. ἀντιλήψεις

86. ἀντιλαμβάνομαι

pnēumatōn),⁸⁷ to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

The noun used for "the ability to distinguish" (diakrisēis) is also used in Heb 5:14 and Rom 14:1 within in the New Testament. The related verb (diakrinēin)⁸⁸ is used in the sense of "to discern, distinguish" in Mt 16:3; 1 Cor 4:7; 6:5; 11:29; 14:29. The use of the noun in Heb 5:14 can help us to illustrate the usage:

But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.⁸⁹

The parable is taken from eating and drinking. A baby can only drink milk. Later man grows to eating solid food and learns to "distinguish good from evil". This means, he learns what food is good for him and what is not really edible. To distinguish between spirits would help to recognize what comes from the Holy Spirit and is good and profitable for spiritual life, and what comes from evil spirits who only try to imitate the Holy Spirit and to lead believers astray.

When we look at certain texts in the New Testament (e. g. Mt 7:15-21; 2 Tm 2:16-19; 2 Pt 2:1-2; 1 Jn 4:1-6) it becomes immediately clear that it was very necessary to distinguish between spirits. All true believers had basic guidance through the anointing of God's Spirit in this area (1 Jn 2:18-27), but of course a believer with a special gift to distinguish between spirits would come in handy many times. If this was true for the first century, it surely is true for today as well.

Word of wisdom In Paul's listing of gifts we also have the word of wisdom (1 Cor 12:7-8):

87. ἄλλω διακρίσεις πνευμάτων

88. διακρίνειν

89. τελείων δέ ἐστιν ἡ στερεὰ τροφή, τῶν διὰ τὴν ἔξιν τὰ αἰσθητήρια γεγυμνασμένα ἔχόντων πρὸς διάκρισιν καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ.

7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit...

Let us note that when Paul starts his listing of various gifts in 1 Cor 12 he begins with "the utterance of wisdom" (lōgōs sōphias).⁹⁰ Within the Old Testament there was already a rich literature of wisdom, as for example in Proverbs, teaching the believers of the church how important wisdom is for practical life. James points more than once to the importance of true wisdom for our Christian life (1:5; 3:13-18). We can easily imagine what a great blessing a word of wisdom can be in a difficult church situation when there is a clash between brothers (1 Cor 6:5-6). There is also an enormous need for wisdom in times of persecution (Lk 21:15-16).

In his prayer for the Ephesians Paul speaks of God's Spirit as "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation" (Eph 1:16-17). Wisdom and revelation and God's Spirit go together: When the Spirit reveals something, he does it with wisdom. When he grants wisdom, it is a revealed wisdom which surpasses the wisdom of this world (compare Jas 3:17). God's wisdom is life changing through the knowledge of God (Eph 1:17-19).

Word of knowledge Paul mentions another gift 1 Cor 12:8:

8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge (lōgōs gnōsēōs)⁹¹ according to the same Spirit...

Because Paul talks here of an utterance or a word of knowledge, he means that someone has a gift to speak in such a way that the believing listeners will receive knowledge of something or someone. He talks about a spiritual gift. So the main focus of this knowledge will be God and spiritual truths: knowing God and knowing the true nature of man and salvation (see also 1 Cor 2:10-16; 14:6).

90. λόγος σοφίας

91. ἄλλω δὲ λόγος γνώσεως κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα

Being transported miraculously from one place to another We have seen in the Old Testament above (section 14.1.2) that Elijah and Ezekiel experienced that God would move them through his Spirit from one place to another. Within the New Testament the Evangelist Philip and the apostle John had similar experiences (Acts 8:39-40; Rv 4:1-2; 17:1.5; 21:9-10).

A sound mind, self-discipline When the times got tougher, Paul wanted to encourage his spiritual child Timothy (2 Tm 1:6-7):

6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, 7 for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.⁹²

Paul encourages Timothy to use his spiritual gift of being an Evangelist (2 Tm 4:5) even if this would mean suffering (2 Tm 2:3). The reason for this is the nature of the Holy Spirit who does not generate fear in Timothy but gives him strength, love, and self-control (sōphrōnismōs)⁹³. Sōphrōnismōs is the state of a sound mind where you have control over yourself or you discipline yourself. This you will need in times of temptation. The problem here is to remain quiet in persecution and troubles and not to fulfill the duty of an Evangelist any more: Waiting till the storm is over. Paul admonishes him, "Let not the fire of this gift burn down and be quenched by fear. " We can imagine that this gift of "self-control" or "self-discipline" is useful in the life of the church of God in any time period.

Grace In Hebrew 10 the believers are encouraged to cling to Christ and to remain faithful to him. They should not in the slightest way move in the direction of apostasy. The language used is very serious, to shock them away from any such danger. We read in Heb 10:29:

How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned

92. οὐ γὰρ ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς πνεῦμα δειλίας, ἀλλὰ δυνάμεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ σωφρονισμοῦ.

93. σωφρονισμός

the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?⁹⁴

With our subject in mind we are interested in the phrase "the Spirit of grace". This genitive here will mean that the Spirit gives grace, that the Spirit is the source of grace. If I behave in a way towards this Spirit of God so that he is no longer willing to grant me any further grace, I am in trouble indeed (see the context in Heb 10:26-31).

On the positive side this phrase "the Spirit of grace" teaches us a very deep and important truth: All the grace we receive from the triune God is somehow related to the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of grace. His gifts are "charismata", gifts of grace. His indwelling in us unites us with Christ and with God the Father so that all blessings and gifts of grace from them to us are channeled through the Spirit.

Fruit of the Spirit Paul uses the enlightening picture of the fruit of the Spirit⁹⁵ to show us what kind of life a Spirit guided believer (Gal 5:18) has (5:22-23):

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.⁹⁶

This fruit of the Spirit stands in contrast to "the works of the flesh" of 5:19-21 which give a summary of human sins and sinful nature. The fruit of the Spirit reflects the holiness of God in the life of his sanctified people. In a way we can say it shows us the nature of Jesus Christ (see Gal 6:2 and 2:19-20). The word "fruit" is used in the singular pointing perhaps to the unity of the different aspects (love, joy, etc.) of the one fruit.

94. καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς χάριτος ἐνυβρίσας

95. ἡ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος

96. 22 Ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐστὶν ἀγάπη, χαρὰ, εἰρήνη, μακροθυμία, χρηστότης, ἀγαθωσύνη, πίστις, 23 πραΰτης, ἐγκράτεια• κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος.

But in Rom 6:20-23 Paul uses the word fruit in a very similar context⁹⁷ to contrast the fruit resulting from a life governed by sin with the fruit resulting from a life governed by righteousness.

In Rom 7:4-6 the contrast is to "bear fruit for God"⁹⁸ or to "bear fruit for death"⁹⁹. To bear fruit for God, to bear the fruit of the Spirit, is possible by having died to sin (Rom 6:11; Gal 5:24) and the law (Rom 7:4; Gal 2:19) and by being united with Christ in his life and Spirit (Rom 6:11; 8:2.9; Gal 2:20; 4:6) and by being guided by the Spirit on an everyday basis (Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18).

The fruit of the Spirit is the best way to determine whether somebody is a real Christian. It is even better than the gifts of the Spirit. Because the gifts can be imitated (Mt 7:21-23), but the tree is recognized by its fruit (Mt 7:16-20).

97. The section in Gal 5:16-6:10 is in short what we have in Rom 6-8 in a longer exposition.

98. ἵνα καρποφορήσωμεν τῷ θεῷ.

99. εἰς τὸ καρποφορῆσαι τῷ θανάτῳ•

Chapter 15

The Church - Ecclesiology

15.1 Words for the Church

15.1.1 In the Old Testament

קָהָל qāhāl

The Hebrew m. noun qāhāl is used for a gathering of people and can be translated with "assembly, convocation, congregation".¹ The LXX quite often translates this word with *ekklesiā*.² The "assembly of the Lord"³ is an important theological concept in the Old Testament and denotes God's people as a holy and privileged body of salvation (see e.g. Dt 23:1-8; Ps 89:5; 149:1).

1. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 874. It is found 122 times in the OT according to Even-Shoshan, A New Concordance of the Bible, p. 1006.

2. *ekklesiā* is used about 74 times in the LXX. It translates qāhāl in the following verses Dt 9:10; 18:16; 23:1; 23:2; 23:3; 23:8; 31:30; Jo 8:35; Jgs 20:2; 21:5.8; 1 Sm 17:47; 1 Kgs 8:14.22.55.65; 1 Chr 13:2.4; 28:8; 29:1.10.20; 2 Chr 1:3.5; 6:3.12.13; 7:8; 20:5.14; 23:3; 28:14; 29:23.28.31.32; 30:2.4.13.17; 30:23.24.25.25; Ezra 2:64; 10:1.8.12.14; Neh 5:13; 7:66; 8:2.17; 13:1; Job 30:28; Ps 22:22.25; 26:5; 35:18; 40:9; 89:5; 107:32; 149:1; Prv 5:14; Lam 1:10; Jl 2:16; Mi 2:5. *ekklesiā* is used for qāhillāh in Neh 5:7, for maqhēlīm in Ps 26:12, for maqhēlōt in Ps 68:26 and for lahāqat in 1 Sm 19:20. In the following verses it is used without corresponding word in the Hebrew text (Dt 4:10; 1 Sm 28:2; 2 Chr 10:3).

3. Found in Nm 16:3; 20:4; Dt 23:1.2.3.8; 1 Chr 28:8; Mi 2:5.

The words qāhāl or ʿēkklēsia can sometimes denote something negative if the people which form the assembly are wicked. Therefore it is possible that Ps 26:5 can speak of "the assembly of evildoers".

The phrase "the assembly of the Lord" is clearly something very positive and glorious. This should be a holy congregation because the Lord is holy (Lv 19:2). There are certain conditions to be part of this assembly (Dt 23:1-2):

1 No one whose testicles are crushed or whose male organ is cut off shall enter the assembly of the Lord. 2 No one born of a forbidden union may enter the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord.

Certain nations are not allowed to enter (Ammonites or Moabites, Dt 23:3-6)⁴, but children born to Edomites or Egyptians "in the third generation may enter the assembly of the Lord" (Dt 23:7-8).

This whole passage shows that the "assembly of the Lord" is not congruent with Israel according to the flesh. Some Israelites are excluded, if they have been sterilized and are not able to produce children.⁵ Some children of Gentile families may enter in the third generation if they have come to faith in the Lord. The door of Israel's faith was open to Gentiles even in the Old Testament (cf. 1 Kgs 8:41-43).

עֵדָה 'ēḏāh

The Hebrew f. noun 'ēḏāh means "congregation" or "company".⁶ It is used about 149 times in the OT⁷, often for the "congregation of Israel" and is a synonym of qāhāl. The standard translation of the LXX for 'ēḏāh is

4. But see Ruth 1:4; 4:13-20; Mt 1:5!

5. In Mi 2:5 such Israelites are left out who are wicked.

6. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 417.

7. According to Even-Shoshan, A New Concordance of the Bible, p. 834. See Ex 12:3.6.19.47; 16:1.2.9.10.22; 17:1; 34:31; 35:1.4.20; 38:25; Lv 4:13.15; 8:3.4.5; 9:5; 10:6.17; 16:5; 19:2; 24:14.16; Nm 1:2.16.18.53; 3:7; 4:34; 8:9.20; 10:2.3; 13:26; 14:1.2.5.7.10; 14:27.35.36; 15:24.25.26; 15:33.35.36; 16:2.3.5.6; 16:9.11.16.19;

synagōgē⁸ which is also used in the NT for the local place of worship of the Jews, for the synagogue.

15.1.2 In the New Testament

The most important Greek word for the church in the New Testament is *ēkklēsia*⁹ which is not a new word but had already been present in the LXX as a translation for the Hebrew word *qāhāl*, assembly. If the word is not new, what then is new in the New Testament? It is the importance of Jesus Christ for the church of God. This becomes evident when we look at the images which are used for the church in the New Testament.

In Acts 19:39 the word is used in the legal and secular sense of a "regularly convened assembly" of the city of Ephesus. In the NT it normally means "the church whether as a congregation gathered for worship or as local Christian community or as the universal church".¹⁰

16:21.22.24.26; 17:5.6.7.10.11; 19:9; 20:1.2.8.11; 20:22.27.29; 25:6.7; 26:2.9.10; 27:2.3.14.16; 27:17.19.20.21.22; 31:12.13.16.26.27; 31:43; 32:2.4; 35:12.24.25; Jo 9:15.18.19; 9:21.27; 18:1; 20:6.9; 22:12.16.17.18; 22:20.30; Jgs 14:8; 20:1; 21:10.13.16; 1 Kgs 8:5; 12:20; 2 Chr 5:6; Job 15:34; 16:7; Ps 1:5; 7:8; 22:17; 68:31; 74:2; 82:1; 86:14; 106:17.18; 111:1; Prv 5:14; Jer 6:18; 30:20; Hos 7:12.

8. συναγωγή

9. ἐκκλησία is found about 111 times in the NT: Mt 16:18; 18:17; Acts 5:11; 7:38; 8:1.3; 9:31; 11:22.26; 12:1.5; 13:1; 14:23.27; 15:3.4.22.41; 16:5; 18:22; 19:32.39.41; 20:17.28; Rom 16:1.4.5; 16.16.23; 1 Cor 1:2; 4:17; 6:4; 7:17; 10:32; 11:16.18.22; 12:28; 14:4.5.12.19.23; 14:28.33.34.35; 15:9; 16:1.19; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:1.18.19; 8:23.24; 11:8.28; 12:13; Gal 1:2.13.22; Eph 1:22; 3:10.21; 5:23.24.25; 5:27.29.32; Phil 3:6; 4:15; Col 1:18.24; 4:15.16; 1 Thes 1:1; 2:14; 2 Thes 1:1.4; 1 Tm 3:5.15; 5:16; Phlm 1:2; Heb 2:12; 12:23; Jas 5:14; 3 Jn 1:6.9.10; Rv 1:4.11.20; 2:1.7.8.11.12; 2:17.18.23.29; 3:1.6.7; 3:13.14.22; 22:16.

10. Zerwick and Grosvenor, *An Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, p.52 under Mt 16:18.

15.2 Images of the Church

15.2.1 God's Temple and Building

In this section we look at the church as God's temple under construction. In Mt 16:18 Jesus says to Peter:

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.¹¹

The confession of Peter that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" is the foundational rock on which Jesus builds his own church (Mt 16:16). The church of God is the church of Jesus Christ, the Lord. Without Jesus there is no church.

For the Roman Catholic Church this is one of the most important verses for their understanding of the office of the Pope. The Pope as the bishop of Rome is seen as the successor of Peter who is understood to have been the first bishop of Rome. Peter's name Pētrōs means rock. He is seen as the rock on which the church is built and "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" are given to him to bind and to loose on earth what shall be bound in heaven (Mt 16:19).

But there are some difficulties in this Roman Catholic construction of the sense of this passage. The first is their identification of the bishop of Rome with Peter. Even if the apostle Peter were the rock on which the church is built, why should the bishop of Rome be his successor? There is no hint in the New Testament for this line which has been drawn by later Roman Catholic power politics and not by sound exegesis of the New Testament.

The second difficulty is the difference between the name of Peter which is masculine in Greek (pētrōs) and the rock on which the church is built which is feminine (pētra). If Jesus wanted to say that Peter is the rock on which the church is built, then Matthew could have used the masculine form both times, for the name of Peter and the foundational rock of the church. But he makes this difference. Therefore it is better to understand "this rock"

11. καὶ γὰρ δέ σοι λέγω ὅτι σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, καὶ πύλαι ᾗδου οὐ κατισχύσουσιν αὐτήs•

as the confession of Peter: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." To belong to the church means to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

As far as Peter remains true to his confession, he is one of the first stones used in building the church (cf. 1 Pt 2:4-5) together with the other apostles and prophets (Eph 2:19-22) but Christ is the most decisive stone, the cornerstone, giving the building its layout or he is the foundation (1 Cor 3:11) for the whole structure.

The third difficulty is that not only Peter receives the power to bind and loose, but any group of at least two or three believers who gather in the name of Jesus and agree in prayer shall have this same power because they represent the power given to the church (Mt 18:16-19).

After Jesus told in the parable of the tenants that the tenants killed the son of the owner of the vineyard to get his inheritance, Jesus explains that the murder of the son reflects a great change in salvation history (Mt 21:42-44):

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? 43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. 44 And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

These verses point back to certain Old Testament passages with stone and building imagery (Ps 118:22-23; Is 8:14-15; 28:16). Following Jesus the apostles in the New Testament understand the rejected stone to be Christ crucified who became the cornerstone of a new building in his resurrection (Rom 9:32.33; 1 Pet. 2:4-10).

Jesus Christ is the Word of God that "became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14; 1:1-3; 1 Jn 1:1-4). When the tabernacle was erected, it was filled with God's glory (Ex 40:33-35). When the temple was completed, it was filled with God's glory (1 Kgs 8:10-11). With these passages in mind John 1:14 presents the body of Jesus Christ as the temple

of the living God with "glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (cf. Jn 2:19-21). "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col 2:9).

The teaching that the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit is based on the fact that the body of Jesus Christ was and is the temple. All members of the church are united with Christ in his death and resurrection and so one spirit with him and the temple of God (Rom 6:3-4; Eph 2:4-7; 1 Cor 6:17-19).

In 2 Sm 7:13 God had promised David that his son would build the temple for the Lord which was fulfilled in Solomon. But after the destruction of Solomon's temple this promise was renewed and connected to the coming Christ, the "Branch" in Zec 6:12-13; 3:8-9. Therefore the Old Testament predictions of the building of a new temple through the coming Christ are taken up in the New Testament and understood of the church as the temple of God. The church as the body of Christ with Christ as the head of his body is the dwelling place of God, the holy temple of the new world (1 Cor 3:9-11):

9 For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. 10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. 11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Throughout church history this magnificent temple of God is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. The completion is the second coming of Christ on "the Day" which will come with fire and destroy all which is not worthy of eternity. This is a great parable. This is the most important building project ever. It is built for eternity. We worship God now in weakness and in short lives with problems and temptations (1 Cor 6:17-20). After that Day we shall worship Him joyfully, free from pain and eternally (Rv 21:3-4):

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be

with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

There will be no temple in the New Jerusalem which would limit God's presence to one part or one building (Rv 21:22):

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

On this earth, the old earth, the tabernacle and the temple of Solomon and the second temple after the Babylonian exile had all the function to give Israel and all people fearing God an address where God could be found, a direction towards to pray to (Dn 6:10; 1 Kgs 8:41-43).

But in the New Jerusalem there is no mediating building put between God and man. The presence of God the Father and Jesus Christ is "the temple" of this city. The real thing, no shadow. God himself present. Between the tabernacle and the temples of the Old Testament and God's visible presence in eternity we have nowadays the church as the temple of God with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in every believer.

It is a building under construction or a body under growth (Eph 4:11-16). On that Day, the day of completion we shall recognize the full extent of the glory the church always had (Rom 8:30). But the glory to come is even greater and more marvelous (1 Jn 3:1-3).

15.2.2 A Living Unity

In the NT several different word pictures are used to present the living unity of Christ and all believers. They are taken either from the area of plant life or the human body and have their origin either in the teaching of Jesus Christ or of the apostle Paul.

True Vine and Branches

We start with the teaching of our Lord in Jn 15:1.5-8:¹²

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser... 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

This is the last of the "I am ..." words of Jesus as said towards his disciples (cf. 18:37) and is placed in the center of his Farewell Discourses (Jn 13-17). In these talks Jesus prepares his disciples for his going away to the Father and the future without his bodily presence. It is highly significant that Jn 15:1-8 is found in the center of these discourses: We have to abide in Christ and Christ in us or his words in us to bring fruit and glorify the Father. Christ and the disciples are one in a spiritual way. The unity with Christ is the spiritual source of their life and of their ability to produce fruit.

To loose contact with Christ would be to be cut off the source of life and the power to bear fruit (15:6). Judas Iscariot is an example for this (Jn 13:2.11.18.19; 17:12). The secret of a fruitful life is to abide in Christ. The unity with Christ results automatically in a changed life which glorifies God. To abide in Christ is to hear his word and obey it (Jn 15:3.7.10.14).

If we ask for the primary cause of our unity with Christ, we are pointed to our election through Christ (Jn 15:16):

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit¹³ and that your fruit should

12. As an OT predecessor Is 5:1-7 can be compared. In the NT see also Mt 20:1-16; 21:28; 21:33-45; Mk 12:1-12; Lk 20:9-18; 1 Cor 9:7.

13. οὐχ ὑμεῖς με ἐξελέξασθε, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ ἐξελέξαμην ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἔθηκα ὑμᾶς ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑπάγητε καὶ καρπὸν φέρετε

abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

Olive Tree and Branches

In Rom 11:11-33 Paul speaks of the temporary hardening of a part of Israel and asks the question:

11 So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. 12 Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!¹⁴

The fact that a part of the Israelites have been hardened in their hearts and not accepted Christ, has opened the door for missions amongst the Gentiles. Now the Gentiles can be saved. The purpose of God in this was not that the hardened Israelites remain excluded from salvation. They may see saved Gentiles, become jealous, repent, accept Christ and thus gain salvation.

This implies that the partial hardening of Israel is not eternal, but temporary. The time will come when this partial hardening of Israel will stop and the fullness of the Israel of that time will come to faith in Jesus Christ and enter the house of salvation. This will bring even greater blessings to the world than their partial being set aside before (11:15-16):

15 For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? 16 If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.¹⁵

The partial rejection of Israel reconciled the world with God. The acceptance of all of Israel will coincide with the resurrection from the dead. In

14. εἰ δὲ τὸ παράπτωμα αὐτῶν πλοῦτος κόσμου καὶ τὸ ἥτιμα αὐτῶν πλοῦτος ἐθνῶν, πόσω μᾶλλον τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῶν.

15. 15 εἰ γὰρ ἡ ἀποβολὴ αὐτῶν καταλλαγὴ κόσμου, τίς ἡ πρόσλημις εἰ μὴ ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν; 16 εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀπαρχὴ ἁγία, καὶ τὸ φύραμα• καὶ εἰ ἡ ῥίζα ἁγία, καὶ οἱ κλάδοι.

Rom 11:16 Paul starts to use the figure of a good olive tree with its root and branches to illustrate this truth. The "root" of this olive tree¹⁶ is God's source of salvation starting with his gifts to the forefathers Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David (11:28). These gifts were all related to the coming Christ and dependent on him (Gn 12:3; 22:18; Gal 3:8.16; 2 Sm 7:11-16; 23:5).¹⁷

Those Israelites who did not accept Jesus are like branches of this good olive tree that have been broken off (Rom 11:17-20). A Gentile who accepts Christ is like a wild olive shoot which is grafted in the good olive tree (11:17.20). Having faith or lacking faith is decisive. God can cut a Gentile off if he becomes proud and does not continue in God's kindness (11:22). And God can surely graft the fallen Israelites in again if they come to faith in Christ (11:23-24).

The partial hardening has come upon Israel only for a limited time, that is "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (11:25). Then this partial hardening will cease and the whole nation of Israel, living at that time, will recognize Jesus as the Christ and be saved at the coming of Christ (11:26-27; cf. Is 59:20-21; Jer 31:33):

26 And in this way all Israel will be saved,
as it is written,
"The Deliverer will come from Zion,
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";
27 "and this will be my covenant with them
when I take away their sins."¹⁸

The words "in this way" and "as" it is written correspond to each other: Israel will be exactly saved in the way it has been predicted. The "and ... Israel will be saved" can be understood in the sense of "and then ... Israel will be saved" as in the translation of Martin Luther of 1956.¹⁹ First the

16. The figure of the olive tree is already used in the OT for God's people; cf. Jer 11:16; Ps 52:8).

17. Cf. also Paul's use of the word "root" for the coming Christ in Rom 15:12 taken from Is 11:1.10; cf. Rv 5:5; 22:16.

18. καὶ οὕτως πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται• καθὼς γέγραπται• Ἦξει ἐκ Σιών ὁ ῥυόμενος, ἀποστρέψει ἀσεβείας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβ.

19. Die Bibel oder die ganze Heilige Schrift des Alten und des Neuen Testaments -

"fullness of the Gentiles" has to come in and "then" the whole of Israel will be saved.

When Paul speaks of the Deliverer coming "from Zion"²⁰, he may think of the heavenly Zion and the coming of Christ on the last day (Gal 4:26; cf. Heb 12:22). Christ then will forgive the sins of the Israelites, banish ungodliness from them and make them holy. This is seen as related to certain gifts given to the forefathers (11:28-29). That Paul really speaks of the future conversion of Israelites is proved by his phrase: "As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake" (11:28).

By using this figure of the olive tree Paul puts an emphasis on the unity of the body of salvation. Jews and Gentiles who believe in Christ are part of the same living organism. There are not two olive trees of salvation, but one. Whoever believes in Christ, becomes part of this good olive tree. The Israelites who do not acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, are set aside for a while. When the whole nation of Israel will turn to Christ, they will "be grafted back into their own olive tree" (Rom 11:24). This should make us grateful for God's grace towards us Gentiles and humble with regard to God's dealings with Israel. We have no permission to be proud when we see some of them not acknowledging Jesus as the Christ.

Body of Christ

In 1 Cor 12:12-13²¹ Paul wants to illustrate the unity of the church as the one body of Christ while it is made up of people with a great diversity of gifts:

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

Nach der deutschen Übersetzung Martin Luthers (Wien, 1972) . Kai, the Greek word for "and", plus a verb in the future tense can be understood in certain contexts as "and then...", cf. Mt 7:7: "Ask, and (then) it will be given to you."

20. In Is 59:20 it is "to Zion" or "for Zion".

21. The idea in Rom 12:4-6 is very similar.

Every single member of the church is incorporated into the body of Christ by being baptized with the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit gives every member the gifts as he wills (12:7-11). Believers should avoid to feel inferior because they only see and value the gifts in the others and so neglect practicing their own gift (12:15-19). They equally should not pose as superior downplaying the gifts of the others (12:21). "God has so composed the body" that all "may have the same care for one another... suffer together... rejoice together" (12:24-25). This already prepares the way for God's intention with this unity in diversity (12:27-31) which is the "more excellent way", the way of love (12:31; 13:1-13).

In Eph 4 we have the same idea of the unity of the body (4:4) and the diversity of the gifts (4:11) and love as the way of the body of Christ (4:15-16), but there is an extra element of the growth of the whole body and the single members (4:12, 15, 16). The astonishing vision for the growth of the church as the body of Christ is to be like Christ when grown up to full maturity (4:13).

15.2.3 Holy Family and Holy Nation

The church is like a family of brothers and sisters who should care for one another and even admonish each other (Mt 18:14-17). Believers form a nation producing fruits for God's glory (Mt 21:42-43). Gentile believers have joined believers from Israel to form the united people of God (1 Pt 2:9-10; cf. Ex 19:5-6):

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

All who receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord become children of God (Jn 1:12-13), born again of water and the Spirit (Jn 3:3-5). God foreknew them and predestined them "to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom

8:29). The people of God are God's family, his sons and daughters (2 Cor 6:16.18). They are called to live a holy life (2 Cor 6:17-7:1), to be as holy as God their father is (Lv 19:2; 1 Pt 1:14-16; Mt 5:44-48).

15.2.4 **Wife or Bride of the Lord**

The closest family ties are used to illustrate God's relationship with his people, with his church: Father and children, husband and wife. The idea of God as loving husband and his people as his beloved wife or his bride are found in the Old and New Testaments.

In the Old Testament

In the ten commandments we learn about God that he is 'a jealous God' who forbids to have other gods before him or to make an idol to worship it (Ex 20:3-5). In Ex 34:13-17 idolatry is further explained as a kind of adultery and unfaithfulness. The implied idea is that God is the husband of Israel and to have any other god besides him would be a breach of faithfulness (cf. Lv 17:7; 20:5-6; Nm 15:39; Dt 31:16; Jgs 2:17; 8:27.33; 1 Chr 5:25; 2 Chr 21:11-13; Ps 73:27; 106:39).

God commands the prophet Hosea in his calling:

“Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord.”

Hosea's family life became one of the most drastic sermons to call Israel to repentance and faithfulness. In Hosea God's love fights for the faithfulness and love of his people. God punishes Israel and leads her into the desert to regain her love and restore their loving relationship for ever (Hos 2:5-20; 3:3; cf. 4:10-18; 5:3-5; 9:1).

Isaiah uses the same figure of marital unfaithfulness for Jerusalem's sins (Is 1:21; cf. 57:3), but has also a strong emphasis on God's grace and love winning back Zion, his estranged wife, and making her a beautiful bride again, a glorious New Jerusalem (1:26; 2:1-5; 49:14-50:3; 51:17-23; 52:1-2; 54:1-17; 60:1-22; 62:1-12; 65:17-19; 60:1-22; 62:1-12; 65:17-19; 60:1-

22; 62:1-12; 65:17-19; 60:1-22; 62:1-12; 65:17-19; 60:1-22; 62:1-12; 65:17-19; 60:1-22; 62:1-12; 65:17-19; 66:8-13).

Jeremiah speaks of Israel's and Judah's sins and unfaithfulness as adultery and so continues this prophetic tradition (Jer 2:20; 3:1.3; 3:6.8) as does Ezekiel (6:9; 16:1-58). Both prophesy the restoration of God's loving covenant relationship with his people as well (Jer 3:11-25; 31:31-34; Ez 16:59-63).

In the New Testament

The New Testament continues the OT prophetic tradition of God's people being God's wife or bride. When the disciples of John the Baptist told him that now all people were going to Jesus, John answered without any jealousy (Jn 3:28-30):

28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' 29 The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

Jesus as the Christ is the bridegroom. The bride are all those who repent, are born again and so become his people (Jn 1:33; 3:3.5), first out of Israel (Jn 1:31; Mt 3:9) and then also out of all nations (Jn 10:16). It is highly significant that the first miracle of Christ happened at a wedding revealing the glory of Jesus who has come as the bridegroom to win his bride (Jn 2:11; Mt 9:15).

To this fits what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth (2 Cor 11:2): The whole situation in Corinth is a crisis of deception aimed at seducing the church, the bride of Christ as Eve was led astray by the serpent in Paradise. Paul speaking here as prophet (Acts 13:1) and apostle, fights the influence of false apostles in Corinth who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ but are really servants of Satan (2 Cor 11:13-15). Paul stands very much in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets who warned Israel not to commit "adultery" under the influence of false prophets. They seem to preach Jesus,

but this is another Jesus. They help believers in Corinth to receive a spirit, but this is a different spirit and not God's Spirit.

In 1 Cor 6:16-17 warns the Corinthians not to commit sexual immorality with prostitutes:

16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

The unity of the sexual immoral person with the prostitute is called "one flesh". The unity of a believer with the Lord Jesus is called "one spirit". If a believer unites with a prostitute, then the "members of Christ" are made "members of a prostitute" (6:15). That is a capital offense against the temple of God (6:18-20; 3:16-17).

Often the problems in the churches gave Paul the opportunity for some deep teaching about Jesus Christ. For him the therapy of all kinds of illnesses and sins is always one: Jesus Christ. This statement is very deep and very precious: "But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him."²² In the spiritual realm the church is united with Christ, one with him. Every single believer is one spirit with Jesus Christ. That is a marvelous truth. It is also the foundation of salvation and eternal happiness. Paul also uses the loving relationship between Christ and his church as a pattern for the relationship of husband and wife in Eph 5:25-33.

The last of the four Hallelujahs in Rv 19 is found in Rv 19:6-8 and mentions the marriage of the Lamb with his Bride:

Hallelujah!
 For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.
 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,
 for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
 and his Bride has made herself ready;
 8 it was granted her to clothe herself
 with fine linen, bright and pure.

22. ὁ δὲ κολλώμενος τῷ κυρίῳ ἓν πνεῦμά ἐστιν.

The identity of the Bride of the Lamb is revealed in Rv 21:2.9-11 as "the holy city, new Jerusalem". This agrees with certain passages in the OT where Jerusalem or Zion is the Bride or the Wife of the Lord. The new Jerusalem is the final destiny of all believers of all times and all nations, out of Israel and the Gentiles. It is "the dwelling place of God ... with man" (Rv 21:3). The facts that "on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed" and that "the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (21:12.14) point to the unity of the people of God of the Old and the New Testaments (cf. Jn 10:16; Mt 8:11).

15.2.5 **The Church's Citizenship is in Heaven**

The new Jerusalem is not only coming down out of heaven in the future (Rv 21:2.9-14; 19:7-8), but already exists now in heaven. Paul calls her "our mother" (Gal 4:26; cf. Ps 87:3-7). Therefore every believer is a foreigner on earth and at home in heaven (Phil 3:20-21).

Our real home is with the Lord Jesus in heaven: "While we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord... we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:6-9). That means after death believers enter their home to stay with the Lord for ever as "the spirits of the righteous made perfect" (Heb 12:22-24). In comparison to one's own personal death as an entrance door to heaven an even better option would be to experience the second coming of Christ alive and to have one's body be transformed "so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life" (2 Cor 5:4).

15.2.6 **Flock of God**

In the Old or the New Testaments there is the idea that God is the shepherd of his people, either himself or through his appointed leaders, especially through the anointed king or Messiah. The people are seen as sheep of God's flock. If the leaders are corrupt and selfish and neglect the sheep, the people are like sheep without a shepherd. God as the good shepherd using his good shepherd, the coming Messiah, grants the ultimate salvation of the

people of his flock.

In the Old Testament

Jacob blesses the children of Joseph in the name of "the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day" (Gn 48:15; cf. Gn 49:24). David also sees God as his and Israel's shepherd (Ps 23:1; 28:9), as do Asaph (Ps 80:1), Isaiah (40:11, Jeremiah (31:10, Ezekiel (34:12.15, Amos (3:12), Micah (7:14) and Zecariah (11:4.7.8.9). God is the "one Shepherd" who gives the wise men their words of wisdom (Eccl 12:11).

God appoints "shepherds" for his people like Moses and his team (Is 63:11), Joshua (Nm 27:17), the judges (2 Sm 7:7; 1 Chr 17:6), David (2 Sm 5:2; 1 Chr 11:2), Ps 78:71-72 and even Cyrus (Is 44:28).

God condemns and punishes corrupt and selfish leaders who are evil shepherds (Jer 2:8; 10:21; 12:10; 23:1-2; 25:34-36; 50:6; Ez 34:2.5.7.8; 34:9.10; Zec 10:2-3; 11:3.5; 11:15.16.17). When God punishes such leaders as for example king Ahab, Israel may be scattered like sheep without shepherd (1 Kgs 22:17; 2 Chr 18:16).

Part of God's salvation for the last days is his giving good shepherds to his people, especially the Messiah (Jer 3:15; 23:3-6; Ez 34:23; 37:24; Mic 5:4-6; Zec 11:4.7.8.9; 13:7).

In the New Testament

Jesus is the good shepherd of Israel who had to be born in Bethlehem as prophesied by Micah (5:2.4) and pointed out by Matthew (2:6). Jesus felt the compassion of a shepherd to gather the lost and scattered sheep of Israel and care for them (Mt 9:36; 10:6; Mk 6:34).

As predicted (Zec 13:7) his death would temporarily scatter his disciples but having risen he would meet them again in Galilee (Mt 26:31-32; Mk 14:27-28). He is the good shepherd that lays down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:2.11.12). He knows his sheep by name, calls them, they follow him and he gives them eternal life (Jn 10:3.14.27-28). He has some sheep from Israel and others from the Gentiles and unites them under his leadership (Jn 10:16).

Jesus is the Shepherd of our souls (1 Pt 2:25) and as the chief Shepherd the example for elders who have to shepherd the church of God (1 Pt 5:2,4; Heb 13:20). On judgment day Jesus "will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Mt 25:32). He will rule the nations with a rod of iron whereby the word "rule" means literally "shepherd" (Rv 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). Jesus will continue to care for his sheep in all eternity (Rv 7:17).

Because Peter says "Yes" to the question whether he loves Jesus, Jesus restores him to his calling: "Tend my sheep" (Jn 21:16). Later Peter can encourage his fellow elders "to shepherd the flock of God" with the right motivation (1 Pt 5:1-4). Although to care for the sheep implies the right to receive salary, Paul did not use this right (1 Cor 9:6-7). Elders or overseers or shepherds (pastors) are appointed by the Holy Spirit to shepherd "the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

15.2.7 God's Field

The church is also compared to God's field where people can work in (1 Cor 3:9). Some sow and others may reap when it is time to harvest (Jn 4:35). When the harvest is plentiful, we are commanded to "pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Mt 9:37-38).

15.2.8 God's Army

In Mt 16:18 Jesus combines the figures of building and fighting:

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.²³

Jesus builds his church in such a way that it is more powerful than the "gates of Hades". In the NT Hades is the realm of the dead, corresponding to Sheol in the OT. In the OT believers like Jacob reckoned to go down to Sheol at the time of their death (Gn 37:35). With the death and resurrection of Christ things have changed in the New Covenant.

23. καὶ πύλαι ᾗδου οὐ κατισχύσουσιν αὐτῆς•

Now believers have the hope to enter Paradise at the time of their death (Lk 23:43) which seems to be located in the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2-3) in the new Jerusalem (Rv 2:7; 22:2). Through his death Jesus destroyed the one who had "the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14). The Risen One has "the keys of Death and Hades" (Rv 1:18; cf. Eph 4:8-10).

Therefore the church prevails against "the gates of Hades". This phrase seems to present Hades as a city with walls surrounding and protecting it. The gates are also the place where the leaders sit, the elders. The phrase could point to the leadership of Hades. Whoever conquers the gates of a city has conquered the city and is now lord of it (Gn 22:17). Christ's divine power is present in the church and overcomes even the last enemy, that is death (1 Cor 15:26,54-55).

If the church is strong "in the Lord and in the strength of his might" it can stand firm wrestling "against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:10-12).

Jesus Christ has overcome the devil (Lk 11:20-22) and the world (Jn 16:33). He "has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals" (Rv 5:5). Christ will overcome the armies of the enemy in the last great battle of this world (Rv 17:14; 16:16; 19:11-21).

The goal of the church's struggle is to see all things in subjection under Christ (2 Cor 10:3-6):

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

Sometimes it seems that the enemy prevails against the saints (Rv 6:2; 11:7; 13:7), but this is only temporarily and in this world (Rv 12:11):

And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

It looked as if they were defeated in their death, but in reality they "conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name" and celebrated their victory on the other side of the sea as Israel did after God's victory over Pharaoh and his army (Rv 15:2).

In all her troubles the church can say that "we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom 8:37). Our faith is "the victory that has overcome the world" (1 Jn 5:4), the evil one (1 Jn 2:13-14) and the false prophets and antichrists (1 Jn 4:4). Those who overcome, have great promises (Rv 2:7.11.17.26; 3:5.12.21; 21:7). To overcome is to have faith in Jesus Christ (1 Jn 5:5).

15.2.9 A New Creation

When the risen Christ "breathed on" the disciples and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20:22)²⁴, he acted as God did when he created Adam in the beginning (Gn 2:7):

Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.²⁵

The risen Christ thus proves that he has divine creative power, that the disciples are spiritually made alive by receiving the Holy Spirit and become a new creation. Thomas first rejected the testimony of his fellow disciples for one whole week, but when Christ revealed himself to Thomas on the next Sunday, he immediately confessed Jesus as his Lord and his God (20:28). It seems that Thomas had understood very well the relevance of the acted parable of Jesus, but rejected the disciples' testimony as false. But when he could see with his own eyes that their report was correct, he came to the deepest faith in Jesus Christ.

The same word of 'breathing into' is also used in Ez 37:9: "Come from

24. καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς• Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον•

25. LXX: καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς, καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν.

the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”²⁶ Ez 37:1-14 thus presents the resurrection of the people of God under the figure of their recreation according to Gn 2:7. The acted parable of Jesus in John 20:22 combines both OT texts: The Risen One is the Creator who can resurrect spiritually dead people and make them a new creation.

Paul develops similar ideas in 1 Cor 15:45-49 also using Gn 2:7 as a starting point:

45 Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.

The above is related to the resurrection body, but even on earth and before his resurrection, anyone in Christ "is a new creation" according to Paul (2 Cor 5:17). He has died to the world by the cross of Jesus Christ and been made alive through his resurrection (Gal 6:14-15; 3:26-29; Eph 2:5.14-16). He is to be renewed in an ongoing process of transformation into the image of Christ who is the prototype of the new mankind (Eph 4:20-24; Col 3:9-11; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:16-18).

15.3 **Fundamental Characteristics of Church**

Going through the above images used for the church we have already come across certain characteristics of God's church, for example that it is one church and that it is holy. Let us look at the united, holy, apostolic and catholic church of God.

26. LXX: Ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων πνευμάτων ἔλθῃ καὶ ἐμφύσησον εἰς τοὺς νεκροὺς τούτους, καὶ ζήσάτωσαν.

15.3.1 **One**

Again and again we are told that the church is 'one' and cannot really be divided even if there are human divisions and quarrels (1 Cor 1:11-13). The church is the one body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13; Eph 2:14-22; 4:4; Rom 12:4-5). We can assume that the spiritual unity Jesus Christ was praying for was granted (Jn 17:20-23).

The life of the church should, of course, reflect this unity in practice (Eph 4:3). In the holy communion we celebrate this unity, "for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:17).

15.3.2 **Holy**

The church is holy and consists of people who are holy. Jesus Christ, the head of the church, is holy (Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34; 1:35; Jn 6:69; Acts 3:14; 4:27.30; 1 Jn 2:20; Rv 3:7; Acts 2:27; 13:35; Heb 7:26). In general God's prophets are holy (Lk 1:70; Acts 3:21; 2 Pt 3:2), as is especially John the Baptist (Mk 6:20). The apostles are holy (Eph 3:5). According to Mt 27:52-53 many OT saints were made alive after Christ's resurrection: "Many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many".

The normal members of the NT church are very often called "saints"²⁷. They are a holy priesthood (1 Pt 2:5) and a holy nation (1 Pt 2:9). They all have received the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9; 15:16) and so are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:17; Eph 2:21) or their body is (1 Cor 6:19).

The church is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:17; 1 Pt 2:4-5). Jesus Christ loved the church so much that he gave himself as a sacrifice "that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor,

27. Acts 9:13.32.41; 26:10; Rom 1:7; 8:27; 12:1.13; 15:25.26.31; 16:2.15; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:1-2; 7:34; 14:33; 16:1.15; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:4; 9:1.12; 13:13; Eph 1:1.4.15.18; 2:19; 3:8.18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18; Phil 1:1; 4:21.22; Col 1:2.4.12; 1:22.26; 3:12; 1 Thes 3:13; 2 Thes 1:10; 1 Tm 5:10; Phlm 1:5.7; Heb 3:1; 6:10; 13:24; 1 Pt 1:15.16; 3:5; Jude 1:3; Rv 5:8; 8:3-4; 11:18; 13:7.10; 14:12; 16:6; 17:6; 18:20.24; 19:8; 20:6.9; 22:11.

without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:26-27).

15.3.3 **Apostolic**

There are several indicators in the New Testament, that the apostles of Jesus Christ have a special importance for the church so that it can be called "apostolic". We have seen under the figure of the temple that the apostles are part of the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20; Rv 21:14). In the book of Acts the apostles Peter and Paul play a very important role in the progress of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. One of the most important questions of the time was whether Gentiles had to be circumcised to be saved (Acts 15:1.5). This question was answered by a gathering of apostles and elders (Acts 15:6.28-29).

According to the witness of the church of the first centuries most of the New Testament was written by apostles: Matthew (Mt), John (John, 1-3 John, Revelation), Paul (Rom - Philemon, perhaps Hebrews as well), Peter (1-2 Peter; Mark was viewed by the early church as the gospel of Peter written down by his interpreter John Mark). Paul understood James to be an apostle (Gal 1:19). This James the Lord's brother is probably the author of the epistle of James. Luke was not an apostle, but he claims to do the work of a historian based on the account of eyewitnesses among which the apostles were some of the most important.

15.3.4 **Catholic**

The word "catholic" has its origin in the Greek language and means together with church "universal" or "worldwide" church.²⁸ It is related to the idea that there is only *one* true church (see above). In the so-called "Apostles' Creed" we find the words: "And I believe in ... the holy catholic Church".²⁹ In modern times, when people hear the word "catholic" they often think of the Roman Catholic Church. If we want to make a distinction, we can use

28. καθολικός, ή, όν

29. άγιαν καθολικήν εκκλησίαν

the word "Roman" together with Catholic to make it clear that we mean this specific church.

Belief in one united universal church is a wonderful part of Biblical faith. Believers may come from many nations, social backgrounds and cultures, but they are all united in Christ (Gal 3:26-28):³⁰

26 For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.
27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put
on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither
slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all
one in Christ Jesus.

15.4 **Activities of the Church**

If we ask, what happens in the life of the church, what kind of activities are visible in the New Testament, then several things stand out: worship, fellowship, service, witness and mission.

15.4.1 **Worship**

The idea that the assembly or the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit is related to the idea that God is worshiped in the assembly of his saints. As Israel was serving God in tabernacle and temple (Rom 9:4; Heb 9:1.6), Paul challenges us in Rom 12:1: "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:24). Under the influence of the Holy Spirit people may fall down and worship God in the assembly (1 Cor 14:25). We should worship God with psalms (1 Cor 14:26; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16) and hymns (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Mt 26:30; Mk 14:26; Acts 16:25; Heb 2:12) and spiritual songs (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16). This is something which also happens in heaven (Rv 5:9; 14:3; 15:3).

30. See also 1 Cor 12:12-13; Rv 7:9-14.

To give thanks to God the Father and Jesus Christ is part of our worship in time and eternity (1 Cor 14:16; 2 Cor 4:15; 9:11-12; Eph 5:4; Phil 4:6; Col 2:7; 4:2; 1 Thes 3:9; 1 Tm 1:17; 2:1; 4:3-4; 6:16; Rv 4:9.11; 5:12-13; 7:12).

Jesus Christ revealed his glory to his disciples in his ministry on earth (Jn 2:11; 11:40). This also happens now in the assembly (2 Cor 3:18; 4:4-6) and will happen in an even more glorious way in the future (Jn 17:24).

In answer to all the promises or blessings they have received men give or should give glory to God and to Christ³¹.

15.4.2 Fellowship

The word used for fellowship in the Greek NT is κοινωνία *kōinōnia*. It can mean 'sharing, association, fellowship'³². To have fellowship was one of the characteristics of the early church in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42):

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.³³

Our fellowship is with God the Father (1 Jn 1:3.6), with Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:9; 1 Jn 1:3.6), in the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14; Phil 2:1) and with each other (1 Jn 1:3.7). The fellowship with God who is light, should exclude having a share in the darkness (2 Cor 6:14; 1 Jn 1:6). Paul desires to share the sufferings of Christ that he may also share his resurrection glory (Phil 3:10-11).

Paul explains that those who partake of the bread and wine of the Lord's supper, have a share in the fellowship of the blood and the body of Christ (1 Cor 10:16-17):

31. Lk 17:18; 19:38; Rom 4:20; 9:4; 11:36; 15:7; 16:27; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 1:20; 4:15; 8:19; Gal 1:5; Eph 1:6.12.14; 3:21; Phil 1:11; 2:11; 4:20; 1 Tm 1:17; 6:16; 2 Tm 4:18; Heb 13:21; 1 Pt 4:11; 2 Pt 3:18; Jude 1:25; Rv 1:6; 4:9.11; 5:12.13; 7:12; Rv 11:13; 14:7; 19:1.7.

32. Zerwick and Grosvenor, *An Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, p. 356 under Acts 2:42.

33. ἦσαν δὲ προσκατεροῦντες τῇ διδασκίᾳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ, τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς.

16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?³⁴ 17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

Because all partake of one bread, all are also one body of Christ. In the Lord's supper our fellowship is with our Lord and God Jesus Christ and with each other.

One part of Christian fellowship is to help those who are poor and needy (Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:13; Acts 4:32-37; Phlm 1:6.16-18; Heb 13:16). *kōinōnia* can also be used in the more special sense of a partnership in spreading the gospel (Gal 2:9; Phil 1:5).

15.4.3 Service

One further activity of the church is that people serve each other. Here we shall look at "to serve" (*diakōnēō*) and "service" (*diakōnia*) and leave the related word "servant" (*diakōnōs*) to be studied when we come to the "deacons" (see section 16.2.1).

Words used. *The verb διακοέω diakōnēō (to serve) is often used for serving at the table with food or drink or for helping in some other physical need like giving clothes to someone who has none or visiting someone who is ill or in prison (Mt 4:11; Mk 1:13; Mt 8:15; Mk 1:31; Lk 4:39; Mt 25:44; 27:55; Mk 15:41; Lk 8:3; 10:40; 12:37; 17:8; 22:26.27; Jn 12:2; Acts 6:2; Rom 15:25; 2 Cor 8:19.20).*

Jesus Christ came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; Lk 22:26.27). Every one who wants to serve Christ, must follow him on the way of suffering. Then he will join him in his glory as well (Jn 12:26).

Timothy and Erastos helped Paul (Acts 19:22), as might Onesimus if Philemon lets him (Phlm 1:13). Onesiphorus helped a lot in Ephesus (2 Tm

34. τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας ὃ εὐλογοῦμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία ἐστὶν τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ; τὸν ἄρτον ὃν κλάωμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐστὶν;

1:18). The recipients of the letter to the Hebrews served the saints (Heb 6:10).

The OT prophets served the church predicting "the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories" (1 Pt 1:12). The word is also used in the context of the gospel ministry (2 Cor 3:3).

Peter encourages us (1 Pt 4:10-11):

10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies - in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

When we look at the wide range of the use of the verb *diakōnēō* the special service of the deacons in 1 Tm 3:10.13 could mean that they serve people who have physical needs or also that they serve with spiritual gifts. Even if the noun *deacon* is not used in Acts 6:1-7, it seems to me that the seven men appointed to help the widows and "serve tables" (Acts 6:2) can be called "deacons". This would be in agreement with the fact that the word *diakōnēō* often means to help people who have physical needs, in this case poor widows.

The noun *διακονία* *diakōnia* (service, serving) is used for serving at the table with food or drink or helping people with other physical needs (Lk 10:40; Acts 6:1; 11:29; 12:25; Rom 15:31; 2 Cor 8:4; 2 Cor 9:1.12-13).

It can denote the service of an apostle: Judas lost his ministry and is supplanted by Matthias (Acts 1:17.25). Paul's service as an apostle is mentioned in Acts 20:24; 21:19; Rom 11:13; 2 Cor 11:8 and 1 Tm 1:12.

Paul compares the service of Moses as a ministry of death and condemnation with his own ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness and rejoices in the glory of his apostolic ministry (2 Cor 3:7-9; 4:1) which is a ministry of reconciliation (5:18; 6:3).

There is the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4) and the ministry of an evangelist (2 Tm 4:5). Sometimes the context is not very specific: "There are varieties of service, but the same Lord" (1 Cor 12:5). "If service, in our serving (Rom 12:7; cf. Eph 4:12; Col 4:17; Rv 2:19).

Paul requests that the service of the household of Stephanas is acknowledged as a ministry with authority (1 Cor 16:15-16). Paul wants Timothy to bring Mark with him "for he is very useful to me for ministry" (2 Tm 4:11).

Angels are "ministering spirits sent out *to serve* for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation" (Heb 1:14).

The survey of the use of the noun diakōnia reveals a similar wide range of meanings as we have seen in the use of the verb diakōnēō. In both cases the words can mean that people serve others in their physical needs or in their spiritual needs.

15.4.4 Witness

To bear witness to the truth is a key task of the church.³⁵ For bearing witness it is necessary to be an eye or ear or touch witness of what has happened (1 John 1:1). So not everybody can witness about everything. It must be based on true, personally perceived knowledge. The New Testament shows us a whole system of witnesses to the truth in which every single believer is just a part of God's organization to present the truth to the world.

1. God the Father bears witness about Jesus.

Therefore the witness of Jesus about himself does not stand alone (Jn 5:31-32; 8:18). One part of the Father's witness are the signs performed by Jesus or in the name of Jesus (Jn 5:36-37; 10:25; Acts 14:3). Jesus is God's eternal priest (Heb 7:17) and the Son of God (1 Jn 5:9-10).

2. God the Spirit bears witness about Jesus (Jn 15:26; Acts 5:32; 1 Jn 5:6-7), especially also that Jesus brings the New Covenant and forgiveness of sins (Heb 10:15).

3. Scripture bears witness about Jesus (Jn 5:39; Acts 10:43; Rom 3:21-22; Heb 2:6; 7:17; 10:15; 3:5).

35. For evangelist and evangelisation see section 14.2.5.

4. Jesus was born to bear witness to the truth (Jn 18:37), knowing man (Jn 2:25), earthly and heavenly things (Jn 3:11; 3:32-33). A prophet has no honor in his own hometown (Jn 4:44). If Jesus were alone in bearing witness about himself, his witness would not be valid, but the Father agrees with his witness (Jn 5:31-32; 8:13-14; 8:17-18). The world hates Jesus because he testifies about it that its works are evil (Jn 7:7). His signs bear witness about him to be the Christ (Jn 10:25). Jesus knew his betrayer (Jn 13:21). In his testimony before Pontius Pilate Jesus made the good confession (1 Tm 6:13). He is the faithful and true witness (Rv 1:5; Rv 3:14). With his witness he protects the written word of God (Rv 22:18-20).

5. John the Baptist bears witness
 - (a) about himself (Jn 1:19; Jn 3:28),
 - (b) about Jesus (Jn 1:7-8.15; 3:26.28).
 The Spirit descended from heaven like a dove, and remained on Jesus. This was God's sign for John to know that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God (Jn 1:32.34). This witness of John can lead to the salvation of those who accept it (Jn 5:33.34.36).

6. The apostles bear witness about the gospel and Jesus:
 - (a) The Twelve (Mt 10:18; Mk 6:11; Lk 9:5; Jn 15:27; Lk 24:48; Acts 1:8.22; 2:32.40; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39.41.42; 13:31),
 - (b) Peter (Acts 3:15; 8:25; 1 Pt 5:1),
 - (c) John (Jn 21:24; Acts 3:15; 8:25; 1 Jn 1:1-2; 4:14; Rv 1:2.9),
 - (d) Paul (Acts 18:5; 20:21.24.26; 22:15.18; 23:11; 26:16; 26:22-23; 28:23; 1 Cor 1:6; 15:15; 2 Cor 13:1; Gal 5:3; Eph 4:17; 1 Thes 2:12; 4:6; 2 Thes 1:10; 1 Tm 2:6-7; 5:21; 2 Tim 4:1).

7. The testimony of other believers

- (a) A great cloud of witnesses of Old Testament believers surrounds the New Testament believers who press forward to reach the finish line of their race (Heb 12:1).
- (b) The request of the rich dead man in Hades that Lazarus may bear witness and warn his five brothers to repent, was rejected (Lk 16:28).
- (c) Jesus sends the healed leper to the priests as a witness to them (Mt 8:4; Mk 1:44; Lk 5:14).
- (d) Many Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did" (Jn 4:39).
- (e) The crowd that had been with Jesus when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead bore witness to this sign at his entrance in Jerusalem (Jn 12:17).
- (f) The testimony of the eye-witness that Jesus was really dead is true that the readers of the gospel also may believe (Jn 19:35).
- (g) Timothy has confessed his faith before many witnesses (1 Tm 6:12). He has heard the gospel from Paul in the presence of many witnesses and should entrust it to faithful men who will be able to teach others (2 Tm 2:2,14). He should not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, but share in suffering for the gospel (2 Tm 1:8).
- (h) A special group of witnesses (Greek: martyrs) sealed the truth of their testimony with their own blood. The modern English word "martyr" goes back to this special context of blood witnesses: Stephen (Acts 22:20); Antipas (Rv 2:13); the two prophetic witnesses (Rv 11:3,7); souls of martyrs under the altar in heaven (Rv 6:9); those who have conquered the devil by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony and not loved their lives even unto death (Rv 12:11); John sees Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus (Rv 17:6). John saw the souls of those who had been

beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years (Rv 20:4).

- (i) Every single believer is a witness because he has the witness of God that is eternal life in himself (1 Jn 5:9-11). He has the testimony of Jesus (Rv 12:17) which is the spirit of prophecy (Rv 19:10).
- (j) The worldwide proclamation of the gospel by believers even in persecution is a testimony to all nations before the coming of the end (Mt 24:14; Mk 13:9; Lk 21:12-13).

8. The witness through angels (Rv 22:16).

9. Against God's system of testimony stands false testimony

- (a) about Jesus and the use of his testimony against him.

It is clear from the OT commandments that it is sin to give false testimony (Mt 15:19; 18:16; 19:18; Mk 10:19; Lk 18:20). But in spite of this the enemies of Jesus tried to use false testimonies to destroy him (Mt 26:59-60; Mk 14:55.56.57.59) and when they not succeeded in doing this, they turned his true testimony against him (Mt 26:65; Mk 14:63; Lk 22:71), rejecting it.

- (b) against Stephen (Acts 6:13).

15.4.5 **Mission**

The English word mission goes back to a Latin word which means sending. We now look into the mission of God in the New Testament. The person who is send represents fully the authority of the sender. To accept or reject the sent person means to accept or reject the sending person with all the consequences related to this (Mt 10:40; Lk 10:16; Jn 13:16.20). This is valid even for small believing children (Mt 18:5-6; Mk 9:37; Lk 9:48).

- 1. God the Father sends

- (a) the Son at the end of time as the climax of salvation history (Mt 21:37; Mk 12:6; Lk 20:13). The fact that God sent his Son is stated very often (Lk 4:18; 4:43; Jn 3:34; 4:34; 5:23.24; 5:30; 5:37; 6:38.39.44; 7:16.18; 7:28.29.33; 8:16.18; 8:26.29; 8:42; 9:4; 10:36; 12:44; 12:45.49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; Acts 10:36; Rom 8:3). He sends him first only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt 15:24; Acts 3:26), but then also as salvation to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28; cf. 13:47). He did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him (Jn 3:17). The signs prove that Jesus is sent by God (Jn 5:36.38; Jn 9:7; Jn 11:42). To do God's work is to believe in Jesus as sent by God (Jn 6:29) which brings life (Jn 6:57; Jn 17:3; 1 Jn 4:9). The disciples recognized that Jesus was sent by the Father (Jn 17:8.25). The perfect unity of the believers in the Son and in the Father causes the world to realize that the Father has sent the Son (Jn 17:21.23). It is God's love that he "sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" and "the Savior of the world" (1 Jn 4:10.14). At the end of the end times the Father will send his Son again (Acts 3:20).
- (b) the Holy Spirit from heaven (1 Pt 1:12; Jn 14:26).
- (c) angels. They are "ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation" (Heb 1:14). Gabriel was sent to Zechariah and Mary (Lk 1:19.26). God "has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place" (Rv 22:6).
- (d) Moses to liberate Israel from the slavery in Egypt (Acts 7:34.35).
- (e) Elijah was not sent to widows in Israel, but to the widow in Zarephath (Lk 4:26).
- (f) John the Baptist in fulfillment of Is 40:3 and Mal 3:1 (Mt 11:10; Mk 1:2-3; Lk 7:27; Jn 1:6; 1:33); to prepare the way for Christ (Jn 3:28).
- (g) his workers and servants into their allotted work (Mt 20:2). Without being sent by God, nobody can preach the gospel with

authority (Rom 10:15). Often God's servants are rejected (Mt 21:34,36; Mk 12:2-5; Mt 22:3-4; Mt 23:37; Lk 13:34; 14:17; 20:10-12).

- (h) God sends punishment to those who reject his servants (Mt 22:7) and a strong delusion to those who do not believe the truth (2 Thes 2:11).

2. Jesus sends

- (a) the Twelve first only to the lost sheep of Israel, not to Gentiles and not to Samaritans (Mt 10:5-6). He sends them as sheep in the midst of wolves (Mt 10:16) to preach and heal and cast out demons after they have been with him (Mk 3:14; Mk 6:7; Lk 9:2; Lk 22:35). After his death and resurrection Jesus sends the Twelve to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:18-20). This great commission is also the task of the whole church (2 Tm 2:2).
- (b) the Seventy Two (Lk 10:1) as lambs in the midst of wolves (Lk 10:3);
- (c) his disciples to reap that for which they did not labor but others before them (Jn 4:38). Jesus sends the disciples as the Father had sent him (Jn 17:18; Jn 20:21).
- (d) certain disciples for special tasks (Lk 9:52; Mt 21:1-3; Mk 11:1-3; Lk 19:29,32; Mk 14:13; Lk 22:8; Acts 9:17);
- (e) certain healed people to certain places (Mk 8:26);
- (f) the Holy Spirit, the promise of his Father, upon the disciples. They should stay in the city until they are clothed with power from on high (Lk 24:49; Jn 15:26; 16:7). The seven eyes of the lamb are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth (Rv 5:6).
- (g) the apostle Paul to the Gentiles (Acts 26:17). Christ did not send Paul "to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power" (1 Cor 1:17).

- (h) his angels to remove the wicked on the day of judgment (Mt 13:41) and to gather his elect from the four winds (Mt 24:31; Mk 13:27). He sent an angel to bring the book of Revelation to John (Rv 1:1; 22:16).
- (i) prophets and wise men and scribes to Israel (Mt 23:34; cf. Lk 11:49);
- (j) Jesus, seated on a white cloud, sends his sickle to reap the harvest of the earth (Rv 14:15) while an angel sends his sickle to gather the clusters from the vine of the earth into the great winepress of the wrath of God (Rv 14:18).
- (k) Demons ask Jesus not to send them out of the area (Mk 5:10), not to command them to depart into the abyss (Lk 8:31), but to send them into the swine (Mt 8:31; Mk 5:12).

3. The Holy Spirit sends

- (a) the servants of Cornelius to let Peter come to preach the gospel (Acts 10:19-20; cf. 11:13);
- (b) Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:4).

4. The twelve Apostles send Peter and John to the Samaritans (Acts 8:14). Together with the elders they send Judas and Silas with the letter containing the decision of the Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:22.25; 15:27.33; 21:25). John had to send the book of Revelation to the seven churches (Rv 1:11).

5. The apostle Paul sends Timothy to Thessalonica (1 Thes 3:2.5); Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia (Acts 19:22); to the elders of Ephesus to come to Milet (20:17); people to Corinth, including Timothy (1 Cor 4:17), Titus (2 Cor 12:17) and others (2 Cor 9:3); Tychicus to Ephesus (Eph 6:21-22; 2 Tm 4:12) and Colossae (Col 4:7-8); the appointed brothers of Corinth to Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:3; Timothy to Philippi (Phil 2:19.23) and Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25.28); Artemas or Tychicus to Titus in Crete (Tit 3:12).

6. Churches send help. Antiochia sends hunger relief to Judea through Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:29.30). The churches of different areas send messengers to accompany the gift for the poor in Judea (2 Cor 8:23).
7. Lazarus was not sent to reduce the pain of the rich man in Hades nor to warn the rich man's five brothers to repent lest they also come into that place of torment (Lk 16:24.27).

Chapter 16

Sacraments and Church Leadership

16.1 Sacraments

The Latin translation of the Bible, the Vulgate, translated the NT Greek word "μυστήριον" *mystērion* (English "mystery") in many verses¹ with "mysterium" (English "mystery"), but in some places the word "sacramentum" (English: sacrament) is used (Eph 1:9; 3:3.9; 5:32; Col 1:27; 1 Tm 3:16; Rev 1:20; 17:7).² Sacraments can be understood as visible means of

1. Mt 13:11; Mk 4:11; Lk 8:10; Rom 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor 2:7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph 3:4; 6:19; Col 1:26; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thes 2:7; 1 Tm 3:9; Rv 10:7; 17:5.

2. According to Daniel G. Van Slyke, "Sacramentum in Ancient Non-Christian Authors," accessed August 3, 2015, Antiphon 9, no. 2 (2005): 167–206, http://liturgysociety.org/JOURNAL/Volume9/9_2/9.2VanSlyke.pdf sacrament was used in ancient non-Christian authors mainly in a military, a legal, and an analogous military context (p. 167). In the legal context which seems to have been first, sacramentum was a "sacred deposit" of money (from *sacrum* "sacred") which the plaintiff and the defendant each deposited and only the winner of the case would get his deposit back (p. 182). "The vast majority of non-Christian evidence for the meaning of sacramentum points more or less directly to the military oath of the Roman soldiery. Only by extension does that oath come to imply devoted service unto death, obligation, and fidelity - primarily in the military context, but analogously in other contexts, such as among thieves, gladiators, philosophers, and devotees of Isis" (p. 205). "The military sacrament put one into a new set of respon-

God's invisible grace for the church's growth.³

It is customary within Protestantism to think of two sacraments: baptism and Holy Communion.⁴ We shall now look at both of them.

16.1.1 Baptism

Words used

1. The m. noun ὁ βαπτιστής *hō baptistēs* "the Baptist"⁵ is used as part of the name of "John the Baptist", especially to distinguish him from

sibilities occasioned by a new set of relationships: with the emperor, with one's fellow soldiers, with the citizens of Rome, and even with Rome's enemies. It obliged soldiers to serve exclusively the emperor in whose name they swore. The emperor in turn rewarded them for their service with land or money" (p. 205). "The military sacrament's rich set of implications was converted readily to a Latin Christian self-understanding. Through the Christian sacrament, one enters upon a new set of relations and responsibilities with Christ, with one's fellow Christians, and with the enemies of Christ. The very concept of sacrament provided a means of Romanizing or Latinizing the covenantal relationship that Christians perceived between themselves and their God, and likewise amongst themselves, enabling them to express it in the discourse of Roman culture. Entering into a sacrament with God entailed responsibilities on the part of the Christian, but it also entailed promises on the part of God, which are manifest in the typology of scripture and the rites of early Christian communities" (p. 205-206).

3. St. Augustine understood a sacrament as a holy sign (*sacrum signum*) and the elements of a sacrament as visible words (*verba visibilia*). "The word is added to the element, and there results the Sacrament, as if itself also a kind of visible word" (Philip Schaff, NPNF1-07. St. Augustin: Homilies on the Gospel of John; Homilies on the First Epistle of John; Soliloquies, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1886), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/scshaff/npnf107.html>, p. 447 in his Tractate LXXX,3 about John 15:1-3). See for the Latine "Accedit verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum, etiam ipsum tanquam visibile verbum" Loofs, *Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte*, p. 373-374.

4. The number of seven sacraments in Roman Catholic tradition is already propagated in the "Four Books of Sentences" by Peter Lombard from the twelfth century (4, 1 to 42). They are baptism, confirmation, the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, penitence, anointing of the sick, marriage and holy ordination (*baptismus, confirmatio, sacramentum corporis et sanguinis Christi, peenitentia, unctio infirmorum, matrimonium, sacra ordinatio*; see *ibid.*, p. 571-572.)

5. Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, p. 263.

John the apostle (Mt 3:1; 11:11,12; 14:2,8; 16:14; 17:13; Mk 6:25; 8:28; Lk 7:20; 7:33; 9:19).

2. The m. noun ὁ βαπτισμός *hō baptismōs* "immersion"⁶ denotes the ceremonial washing of dishes and dining couches in Mk 7:4 practised by the Pharisees, points to OT ceremonial washings in Heb 9:10 and perhaps also in Heb 6:2. In Col 2:12 Paul speaks of believers as "having been buried" with Christ "in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God".
3. The n. noun τὸ βάπτισμα *tō baptisma* "baptism"⁷ is used for the baptism of John, a baptism of suffering (of Jesus, and of James and John) and Christian baptism.
 - (a) John's baptism (Mt 3:7) is at the beginning of every gospel and started the revival movement preparing the way for Jesus (Acts 1:22; 10:37; 18:25; 19:3,4). It was "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3; Acts 13:24; 19:4) and should be acknowledged as ordained by God (Mt 21:25; Mk 11:30; Lk 7:29; Lk 20:4).
 - (b) A baptism of suffering
 - i. of Jesus (Lk 12:50; Mk 10:38,39)
 - ii. of James and John (Mk 10:38,39).
 - (c) Christian baptism of which there is only one (Eph 4:5). Believers are buried with Christ "by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father", they too might walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4; cf. Col 2:12). God saved the eight people of Noah's family in the ark through the water of the flood which water now as an antitype saves believers with regard to baptism, "not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pt 3:21).

6. *ibid.*, p. 263.

7. *ibid.*, p. 263.

4. The verb βαπτίζω baptizō "to immerse, submerge, baptize"⁸ is used for the water baptism of John, for Jesus baptizing through his disciples with water, for Christian water baptism, for Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire and for a ceremonial ablution practiced by the Pharisees.
 - (a) Baptism of John (Mt 3:6.11; Mt 3:13.16; Mk 1:4.5; Mk 1:8.9; 6:14.24; Lk 3:7.12; 3:16; 3:21; 7:29.30; Jn 1:25.26.28; 1:31.33; 3:23; 10:40; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 19:3.4).
 - (b) Jesus baptizing through his disciples with water (John 3:22.26; 4:1.2).
 - (c) A baptism of suffering
 - i. The suffering of Jesus (Mk 10:38.39; Lk 12:50).
 - ii. The suffering of James and John (Mk 10:38.39).
 - (d) Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire (Mt 3:11.14; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16; 1 Cor 12:13).
 - (e) Christian water baptism (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:16; Acts 2:38.41; 8:12.13.16; 8:36.38; 9:18; 10:47.48; 16:15.33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16; Rom 6:3; 1 Cor 1:13.14.15; 1:16.17; 15:29; Gal 3:27).
 - (f) All Israelites of the exodus were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor 10:2).
 - (g) A ceremonial ablution ("baptism") practiced by the Pharisees and many Jews before eating (Mk 7:4), but not by Jesus (Lk 11:38).

Significance and characteristics of the different main baptisms of the NT.

The main baptisms of the New Testament are the baptism of John, Jesus baptizing through his disciples with water, the baptism of suffering, Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire and Christian water baptism. They are all linked to each other and the main link is the person of Jesus Christ.

8. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 261-263.

1. The baptism of John

- (a) An eschatological baptism. John preached: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The kingdom of heaven would end this world and remain forever. God the Lord would come and his judgment would hit those who would not repent from their sins. The person who gets baptized signals his eagerness to enter the new world and leave the old.
- (b) A baptism of repentance (Mk 1:4; Lk 1:3). The person who gets baptized shows that he wants to leave his old sinful life and start a new holy life under God's rule and guidance.
- (c) A baptism for the forgiveness of sins (Mk 1:4; Lk 1:3). The forgiveness of sins is related to repentance. The repenting sinner confesses his sins while getting baptized (Mk 1:5), that means that he agrees before God that these deeds were wrong and he wants to forsake them (Prv 28:13). God promises that he shall forgive the true repentant sinner and help him into his kingdom.
- (d) A baptism of purification (Jn 3:25). To enter the presence of God, man has to be pure. This of course also relates to the forgiveness of sins. But it is also a concept in its own right. God is holy and pure. And to encounter the coming Lord on his day, man has to be pure and prepare the way for God's coming to him (Is 40:3-8; Mal 3:1-3; 4:5-6; Mk 1:2-3; cf. Tit 3:5).
- (e) A baptism of obedience. Jesus did not need water baptism from John for the forgiveness of any sins, because he was sinless. John realized that he himself needed to be baptized by Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with fire and John was astonished that Jesus would come to him for baptism (Mt 3:14). But because Jesus acknowledged John as a prophet of God, he also accepted his sermon about the near kingdom of God and his water baptism as a divine ordinance of righteousness to be fulfilled by every Israelite, including himself (Mt 3:15).
- (f) A baptism to become a disciple of the kingdom of God. The statement in Jn 4:1 "that Jesus was making and baptizing more

disciples than John" implies that baptizing and disciple making go together (cf. Mt 28:19).

- (g) Only a water baptism in comparison to the immersion in the Holy Spirit and fire. When people started to think whether John might perhaps be the Christ, he answered with the following statement: "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Lk 3:16). His own baptism is "only" with water, while the coming Christ shall immerse people in God's own Holy Spirit powerfully changing them in their inmost being as in purifying fire.
- (h) A baptism of the coming Elijah (Mal 3:1; 4:5-6; Mt 17:3.11-13) in the desert (Mk 1:2-3; Is 40:3; Hos 2:14-20) and in the water of the Jordan (Mk 1:5.9; Mt 3:6.13). God had redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt and brought them through the desert into the promised land. According to Is 40 and Hos 2 the salvation of the end times will again be related to the desert. Israel has to leave her comfort zone (Mt 3:5; Mk 1:5) and hear God the Lord in the desert again.

When the first Elijah was about to be taken up into heaven, his last stations were Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho and then the miraculous crossing of the Jordan. John the Baptist as the second Elijah appeared in the desert in the area of the river Jordan and baptized in that river. The special thing about the water of the Jordan river is that it flows into the "Salt Sea" (Gn 14:3) which is located in the Arabah east of Jerusalem (Ez 47:8) and is nowadays called "Dead Sea" because it is too salty for fish to live therein.

There is a special promise for the Salt Sea to be healed by the waters of the river which shall go forth from the Lord's Temple in Ez 47:8-9 "so everything will live where the river goes". When the book of Revelation takes up Ez 47:1-12 in Rv 22:1-2.17, it calls this river in the New Jerusalem "the river of the

water of life" and invites all to drink of its waters without price (cf. Rv 7:17; Jn 7:37-39; 4:10-14; Is 49:10; 44:3; 55:1; Joel 3:18; Zec 14:8).

In these New Testament applications of the Old Testament texts the Holy Spirit is identified with the "water of life" or the "living water". So our spirit which is dead in sins (Eph 2:1) can be compared to the dead water of the Salt Sea. As soon as the water of life coming from the presence of God enters the "dead water", the dead water is healed and comes alive and our spirit becomes "one spirit" with the Lord (1 Cor 6:17).

What makes the Salt Sea dead is all the salt being carried into it mainly by the water of the Jordan. Because the Salt Sea is way below the sea level of the Mediterranean Sea, there is no water way to transport the salt out again. When John the Baptist was baptizing the repentant sinners "for the forgiveness of sins" while they were confessing their sins, in the picture of this purification their sins were washed away into the water of the Jordan to be carried away towards the deathly area of the Salt Sea.

The deadly dirt was waiting there for the one pure and sinless man who would let himself be baptized by John not to be cleansed but to fulfill all righteousness, not to confess his sins, but to receive the declaration of his heavenly Father that he is the beloved Son with whom the Father is well pleased (Mt 3:13-17). Identified thus by the Father as the Christ of Ps 2:7 and the Servant of the Lord of Is 42:1, he would carry and take away the sins of Israel and all nations as the Lamb of God (Is 53:6; Jn 1:29).

- (i) A baptism towards the coming Christ and Lord. We have seen that John pointed to the mightier one who would come after him (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:7-8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:27). The purpose of his baptism in water was to make this coming Christ known to Israel as the Son of God and the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Jn 1:30-34). Consequently Jesus Christ gathered

his first disciples from the disciples of John (Jn 1:35-51; Acts 1:21-22).

Even in the further development of Acts there were still some who first were baptized with the baptism of John and then would receive the baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:3-5). Paul could say to them: "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus" (Acts 19:4). The baptism of John was Christ-centered in the sense that it prepared the way for Christ the Lord. As the friend of the bridegroom, John collected repentant sinners as the bride for Christ, willing to step back as soon as he would take over (Jn 3:27-30).

2. Jesus baptizing through his disciples with water (John 3:22.26; 4:1.2). This baptism in water is on one level with the baptism of John (see the characteristics there). It is important to realize that Jesus himself did not baptize in water, but let his disciples perform this act of immersion in water (Jn 4:1.2). Another interesting aspect is that those baptized by John became his disciples and those baptized by the disciples of Jesus became disciples of Jesus himself. The revival movement around Jesus was already becoming bigger than the revival movement around John, when Jesus left Judea where he had baptized and departed again for Galilee (Jn 4:3).
3. The baptism of suffering. When James and John wanted to sit at the right hand and left hand of Jesus in his glory, he asked them whether they would be able to drink the cup that he would drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which he would be baptized. When they affirmed, Jesus promised them that they would drink his cup and experience his baptism of suffering, but still the Father would decide where they sit (Mk 10:38-40).

In Lk 12:49-50 Jesus speaks of fire he came to cast on the earth, meaning the Holy Spirit coming down on Pentecost (Lk 3:16; Acts 2:3-4). But before this can happen, he has to undergo a baptism of suffering and his distress is great until it is accomplished. It is of the

greatest significance that Jesus himself made the link of baptism to his sacrificial death at the cross! Paul would later take this up and speak of Christian baptism as being united with Christ in his death and resurrection (Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12).

4. Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire (Mt 3:11.14; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16; 1 Cor 12:13). For a fuller discussion of this phrase see section 13.2.2. For our discussion here it is enough to present the results of the word study. The baptism in the Spirit belongs to the start of the Christian life. It is not a later experience or a "second blessing". It is a first blessing. All believers in Corinth had been baptized in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13), but at the same time Paul can say that most of them are still at the start of their spiritual development (1 Cor 3:1-4). When Jesus baptizes somebody with the Holy Spirit, this person is incorporated into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13), he is made one spirit with Christ (1 Cor 6:17). The baptism in the Spirit is the invisible reality granted by Christ to the believer, while Christian water baptism is the visible word presenting as a sacrament the invisible spiritual blessings of the unity with Christ in front of the visible world.
5. Christian water baptism. The first six qualities are parallel to the corresponding qualities of the baptism of John. See there for the comments.
 - (a) An eschatological baptism. Peter, a disciple of John and of Jesus, makes a link between the water of the flood at the time of Noah and the water of baptism (1 Pt 3:20-21). God saved the eight people of Noah's family in the ark through the water of the flood which water now as an antitype saves believers with regard to baptism, "not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pt 3:21). Perhaps the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus like a dove is related to the dove at the time of Noah, which was a sign that the judgment over the old world was over and Noah and his people could soon enter the

new world and start living there (Gn 8:11-12; 2 Pt 3:5-7; 2:5). When Paul says "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27), he links baptism into Christ with being one with Christ (1 Cor 6:17). Being united with Christ, the believer has died with Christ (Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12). Being crucified with Christ means also to be crucified and dead to the world. Being raised with Christ means being a new creation and part of the new world to come (Gal 6:14-15). In a picture baptism is the door out of this world and into the next. The person who gets baptized signals his eagerness to enter the new world and leave the old.

- (b) A baptism of repentance. According to Acts 2:38 people repent and are baptized.
- (c) A baptism for the forgiveness of sins. People are baptized for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38) or "to wash away" their sins (Acts 22:16).
- (d) A baptism of purification. The washing away of sins implies the idea of purification (Acts 22:16). According to Peter baptism has not to be understood "as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pt 3:21). So the saving power of baptism depends on the appeal of the believer to God to grant him a good conscience and the faithfulness of God to fulfill his promises and cleanse the believer from all sins through the blood of Jesus Christ.
- (e) A baptism of obedience. The church is commanded to baptize people. So baptism is also a question of obedience. Ananias requests Paul not to wait but to let himself be baptized (Acts 9:17-18; 22:12-16). Peter commands the water baptism of Cornelius and his house, after they have received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47.48).
- (f) A baptism to become a disciple of Jesus Christ and to learn and obey all his teaching (Mt 28:19-20; cf. Jn 4:1).

- (g) Only a water baptism in comparison to the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Christian water baptism visibly presents the invisible blessings of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but is not identical with it and has to be distinguished from it.
- i. The two baptisms do not have to happen at the same time. To receive the gift of the Spirit or the baptism with the Spirit may happen simultaneously with water baptism or after water baptism (Acts 2:38; 8:12-16) or it may happen before water baptism (Acts 10:47-48).
 - ii. The persons who baptize have to be distinguished. There are many and different human agents who administer the baptism in water (see e.g. 1 Cor 1:12-17) but there is only one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, that is Jesus Christ (Mt 3:11.14; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16; 1 Cor 12:13).
 - iii. In the context of the divisions in Corinth Paul can say that he is happy that he has not baptized more than a few people in Corinth and that "Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor 1:10-17).
- (h) A baptism of faith in the gospel. It is often stated in the New Testament that the people first hear the gospel, believe in it and then are baptized (Mk 16:15-16; Acts 2:41; 8:12.13; 8:35-38; 16:14-15; 16:30-33; 18:8; 19:4-5).
- (i) A baptism into Christ the Lord. The core truth about Christian water baptism is that it is a baptism into Christ. It presents before the visible world the invisible reality of the union of the believer with Christ. All other things depend on this union.
- i. in the name of Christ (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:47.48; 19:5);
 - ii. one with Christ (Gal 3:27; Rom 6:3);
 - iii. one with Christ in his death and burial (Rom 6:3). In Col 2:12 Paul speaks of believers as "having been buried" with Christ "in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God". Believers

are buried with Christ "by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father", they too might walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4; cf. Col 2:12).

- iv. one with Christ in his resurrection (Col 2:12). Believers are buried with Christ "by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father", they too might walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4; cf. Col 2:12).
- (j) A trinitarian baptism "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19).
- (k) A baptism of unity (Eph 4:5; Mt 28:19).
- (l) A baptism as part of missionary work (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:16).
- (m) A baptism related to salvation (Mk 16:16; Acts 16:30-33).
- (n) A baptism related to the church (Acts 2:41).
- (o) Sometimes a baptism of whole households (Acts 16:15; 16:33; 18:8; 1 Cor 1:16).
- (p) Often an immediate baptism (Acts 8:35-38; 16:30-33).
- (q) It seems that some people in Corinth were "being baptized on behalf of the dead". Paul does not recommend or command this. He just points to the fact. We do not have enough information to fully understand this. The argument of Paul in favor of the reality of the resurrection is clear though: "If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?" (1 Cor 15:29). It would be self-contradictory.

Historical tendencies or discussions about the best time for baptism

Baptism as near to death as possible Because in the New Testament baptism is related to the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), people wondered what would happen if they sin after baptism. In consequence some postponed baptism as far as possible. For example the emperor Constantine let

himself only be baptized when he was dying (337 A.D.).⁹

Baptism as fast as possible Because in the New Testament baptism is also related to salvation (Mk 16:16; Acts 16:30-33) and salvation from sin is a very important part of salvation (Mt 1:21) and sin was not only understood as certain deeds but also in the form of original sin as part of fallen human nature, infant baptism became more and more the norm. Because any human being also a child could die any day, worried Christian parents would welcome baptism for their child as early as possible to eradicate original sin and secure paradise for them in case they should die an early death.

Baptism only after having heard and accepted the gospel When in the 16th century during the time of the Reformation the Bible was translated in vernacular languages and people could understand it, it almost immediately triggered a movement of people favoring believers' baptism. Because it is often stated in the New Testament that the people first hear the gospel, believe in it and then are baptized (Mk 16:15-16; Acts 2:41; 8:12.13; 8:35-38; 16:14-15; 16:30-33; 18:8; 19:4-5), they rejected the baptism of infants and promoted only to baptize believers.

They were called "Anabaptists" (those who baptize again) by their opponents, because they would baptize believers who wanted this, but had already received a baptism as infants. As proof for infant baptism their opponents pointed to the baptism of whole households claiming that probably there were children included (Acts 16:15; 16:33; 18:8; 1 Cor 1:16) and also to the fact that Jesus wanted children to come to him (Mt 19:13-15; 1 Cor 7:14) and to the Old Testament parallel of the circumcision on the eighth day as a sign of the covenant (Gn 17:12-14; Col 2:11-12).

The Baptists ("those who baptize" as they prefer to call themselves) answered that the household baptisms followed the preaching of the gospel and the acceptance of it by the whole household (16:32-33; 18:8), that the children should of course be brought to Jesus, but in Mt 19:13-15 they were not brought to be baptized, but to be prayed for with laying on of the hands.

9. Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, p. 91 §23 h.

They also did not accept Col 2:11-12 as a proof of the parallel of infant baptism with OT circumcision, because they do not see the baptism mentioned in Col 2 as infant baptism, but as believers' baptism: Someone who has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ who died for him, has accepted it by faith and lets himself be baptized in Christ, being united with him in his death and resurrection.

The context of 1 Cor 7:14 is the context of the question of divorce, not of baptism which is not mentioned there:

12 To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. 13 If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. 15 But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. 16 Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?

Paul wants to say that in a mixed marriage¹⁰ where one is a believer and the other not, the believer should not take the initiative to divorce the other. This is not necessary because the power of sanctification in the life of the believer is greater than the power of defilement in the life of the unbelieving partner.

There is a certain power of making the others of the family holy, the unbelieving partner and the children. The making holy of the unbelieving partner does not imply his salvation (7:16!). In the same way the making

10. Paul does not want to encourage mixed marriages here. He does not want believers to marry unbelieving partners. He is totally against that (2 Cor 6:14-16). "A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord." (1 Cor 7:39). To marry "in the Lord" will mean that both are believers in Jesus Christ the Lord. The mixed marriages Paul is speaking of here, are mixed because one of the two came to faith after the marriage and the other not (cf. Mt 10:35-39).

holy of the children, does not imply their salvation. Both the unbelieving partner and the children need personal faith to be saved (Mt 18:5-6.10). But God views marriage as holy which should not be broken by divorce (Heb 13:4), therefore he wants to encourage the believing partner to uphold the sanctity of marriage with this promise: "For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy" (7:14). God is at work in your family. Do not give up. He is able to change your husband and to lead your children to salvation.

It is interesting that baptism is not mentioned here. If Paul would have thought along the lines of the later historical development of saving infants for paradise by baptizing them, he could have mentioned that: "Try to save your children by getting the permission of your husband to baptize them." But he does not speak like this. He speaks of the power of making holy residing in the believing parent, probably because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19-20).

16.1.2 Holy Communion

See also section 11.2.2 about the Lord's supper.

The words of the Lord about the Lord's supper

Jesus himself instituted the Holy Communion or Lord's supper in the night he was betrayed. His own words are the first and most important means to understand this holy tradition. They are given to us according to the gospels of Mt, Mk, Lk and in 1 Cor 11.

Mt 26:26-28	Mk 14:22-24	Lk 22:19-20	1 Cor 11:25
26 Now as they	22 And as they	19 And he took	23 ... the Lord
were eating,	were eating, he	bread, and when	Jesus on the
Jesus took bread,	took bread, and	he had given	night when he
and after	after blessing it	thanks, he broke	was betrayed
blessing it broke	broke it and gave	it and gave it to	took bread, 24
it and gave it to	it to them, and	them, saying,	and when he had
the disciples, and	said,		given thanks, he
said,			broke it, and
			said,

“Take, eat; this
is my body.”

27 And he took
a cup, and
when he had
given thanks he
gave it to them,
saying,

“Drink of it, all
of you,

28 for this is

my blood of the
covenant,

which is poured
out for many
for the
forgiveness of
sins.

“Take; this is
my body.”

23 And he took
a cup, and
when he had
given thanks he
gave it to them,
and they all
drank of it. 24
And he said to
them,

This is

my blood of the
covenant,

which is poured
out for many.

“This is my
body, which is
given for you.
Do this in
remembrance
of me.”

20 And
likewise the
cup after they
had eaten,
saying,

"This cup that
is poured out
for you is
the new
covenant in my
blood."

“This is my
body which is
for you. Do
this in
remembrance
of me.”

25 In the same
way also he
took the cup,
after supper,
saying,

This cup is

the new
covenant in my
blood.

Do this, as
often as you
drink it, in
remembrance
of me.”

John who wrote the last of the four canonical gospels presupposes the knowledge of the Lord's supper within the church based on the first three gospels and Paul's letter and adds an important passage to the understanding of the eating of the flesh and the drinking of the blood of Jesus Christ in John

6:27-65, especially 6:51.53-58.63:

51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh... 53 ... Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever... 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

The Lord's supper is a meal ...

1. that can be called "Lord's supper" κυριακὸν δεῖπνον *kyriakōn deĩp-nōn* (1 Cor 11:20);
2. of participation in the body and blood of Jesus Christ the Lord (1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:23-25.27.-29; Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-24; Lk 22:19-20; Jn 6:51.53-58.63). The word "holy communion" can be understood on the backdrop of 1 Cor 10:16. The Latin Vulgate has here "communicatio sanguinis Christi" and " participatio corporis Domini": "communication of the blood of Christ" and "participation in the body of the Lord".
3. of the table of the Lord and of the cup of the Lord (1 Cor 10:21);
4. of blessing with a blessed cup and a blessed bread (1 Cor 10:16; Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22);
5. of remembrance of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor 11:24-25; Lk 22:19);

6. to "proclaim the Lord's death" (1 Cor 11:26);
7. looking forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus: "until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26; Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 22:18);
8. that is special and holy because it relates to the Lord and has to be distinguished from every secular or worldly meal (1 Cor 10:21; 11:27.29);
9. of the new covenant which is based on the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross (1 Cor 11:25; Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20);
10. which is related to the forgiveness of the sins (Mt 26:28);
11. which is related to eternal life (Jn 6:51.53-58);
12. which is related to a spiritual way of eating by faith (Jn 6:52.60.63-64);
13. which proclaims God's love for the world (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:9-10.16);
14. of the unity of the whole church as one body (1 Cor 10:17);
15. of fellowship of all believers with the Lord and among each other (1 Cor 10:16-17).

Because the Holy Communion is a communion with Jesus Christ the Lord, it is so special and holy. It is the "Lord's supper", we are at the Lord's table and drink from the Lord's blessed cup. At the Lord's table the family of the Lord gathers and celebrates his love, remembers the Lord Jesus who obeyed the father and loved us so much to give his life for us, his very blood and his very body. The family is gathered and united with the risen and exalted Lord and with each other.

The Lord's supper proclaims the death of the Lord Jesus as the foundation of the new covenant and so of salvation, forgiveness of sins and eternal life which will be fully received and enjoyed when he comes to raise all

those from the dead who nourished themselves on his body and his blood by faith in a spiritual way, having fellowship with him all the time.

Whoever celebrates Holy Communion but does not distinguish it from a secular meal (1 Cor 11:20-22, 27-29) or partakes in a way without acknowledging the unity of the whole church as the body of Christ (1 Cor 11:17-19), this is the one who partakes in it "in an unworthy manner" (1 Cor 11:27). It is not a meal for sinless people, because it celebrates that Jesus died for sinners to forgive their sins and save them. People who confess their sins and leave them, are welcome to the table which is prepared for their salvation. All believers should partake in it (Mt 26:27).

Different denominational understandings of the Lord's supper

In different denominations the relationship between the elements of the Lord's supper bread and wine on the one hand and the flesh and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ on the other have been understood in different ways.

Roman Catholic understanding: Transubstantiation. Pope Innocent III made the teaching of the transubstantiation a dogma on the Fourth Council of the Lateran (1215 A.D.):

The body and the blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the outward appearances of bread and wine, after the transubstantiation of the bread into the body and the wine into the blood by the divine power ... And certainly nobody can perform this sacrament except the priest who has been ordained according to religious usage.¹¹

The idea is that the substance of the bread is transformed into the body of Christ and the substance of the wine transformed into the blood of Christ.

11. R. Seeberg, *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte* (Leipzig, 1910) gives the Latin text on p. 93: "corpus et sanguis in sacramento altaris sub speciebus panis et vini veraciter continentur, transsubstantiatis pane in corpus et vino in sanguinem potestate divina ... Et hoc utique sacramentum nemo potest conficere, nisi sacerdos qui rite fuerit ordinatus." The English translation given above was done by Lanz.

What people see and taste is bread and wine in their outer appearance, but in the inmost reality, in the substance they are changed.

The phrase "sacrament of the altar" implies that "the offering of the Eucharist" is understood as a repeated sacrifice that is brought into the presence of God by the priest performing the sacrament. Because the whole presence of Christ is believed to be in every particle of the bread and also the wine, the Catholic church started to give only the bread to the laity and reserve the wine to the clergy. At the same time they prepared special bread, a piece for every believer, lest a fragment of bread might fall down and be eaten by a church mouse.

Lutheran understanding: Real presence.

About the Lord's supper they teach, that the body and blood of Christ are truly present and distributed with the elements in the Lord's supper. And they reject those who teach against this.¹²

Luther combined the idea of the real presence of Christ in the Lord's supper with his ubiquity not only according to his divine nature but also to his human nature: Because divinity and humanity are one in the one person of Jesus Christ, the divine nature of Christ shares its ubiquity with the human nature of Christ and so the body of Christ can be everywhere at the same time.¹³

John Calvin within reformed tradition: Symbolic understanding combined with a spiritual presence.

12. Hans Hinrich <ed> Wendt, *Die Augsburgische Konfession im deutschen und lateinischen Text mit Erklärung des Inhalts und Beifügung der Hauptquellen* (Halle, 1927), p. 51, gives the Latin and German text of the "Confessio Augustana" from 1530 A.D. The above translation was made by Lanz from the Latin: "De coena Domini docent, quod corpus et sanguis Christi vere adsint et distribuantur vescentibus in coena Domini; et improbant secus docentes."

13. Seeberg, *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte*, p. 134.

I say then, that in the mystery of the Supper, by the symbols of bread and wine, Christ, his body and his blood, are truly exhibited to us.¹⁴

Calvin not only rejected the transubstantiation of the Roman Catholic church (IV, 17, 12-15), but also the idea of the ubiquity of the human nature of Christ (IV, 17, 16-17) which Luther affirmed. Calvin sees Christ's ability to be present in the Lord's supper connected to his sitting at the right hand of God and being able to access his people everywhere in a spiritual way:

Christ ... can always be present with his people, breathing into them his own life, can live in them, sustain, confirm, and invigorate them, and preserve them safe, just as if he were with them in the body; in fine, can feed them with his own body, communion with which he transfuses into them. After this manner, the body and blood of Christ are exhibited to us in the sacrament.¹⁵

16.2 **Authority and Leadership of the Church**

16.2.1 **In the New Testament**

The authority of the church

Jesus calls his disciples "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Mt 5:13-16). Paul states that "the household of God ... is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth" (1 Tm 3:15). These are only two

14. Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, p. 962 (IV, 17, 11). The Latin text is found in Seeberg, *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte*, p. 148: "dico in coenae mysterio per symbola panis et vini Christum vere nobis exhiberi, adeoque corpus et sanguinem eius".

15. Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, p. 968 (IV, 17, 18). The Latin text is found in Seeberg, *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte*, p. 148: "suis semper adsit, vitam ipsis suam inspirans, in iis vivat, eos sustineat, confirmet, vegetet, conservet incolumes, non secus ac si corpore adesset; quin denique suo ipsius corpore eos pascit, cuius communionem spiritus sui virtute in eos transfundit. Secundum hanc rationem corpus et sanguis Christi in sacramento nobis exhibetur".

examples of NT texts which underline the importance and authority of the church of God according to the New Testament. Sitting at the right hand of God the Father the risen Lord Jesus rules over everything "in this age but also in the one to come". God the Father "put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Eph 1:20-23). The glorious authority of Jesus the head implies also the wonderful authority of the church as his body.

The way of Jesus: servant leadership

Jesus Christ as the head is the best example for the way he wants his church to be led (Mt 20:25-28):

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

With his emphasis on servant leadership Jesus encourages his disciples to humble themselves and avoid certain titles (Mt 23:8-12):

8 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher¹⁶, and you are all brothers. 9 And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. 10 Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. 11 The greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

16. This one teacher is Jesus Christ. In the NT the title "teacher" is permitted to describe a gift of grace by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1; 1 Cor 12:28.29; Eph 4:11; 1 Tm 2:7).

Now let us have a look at the leadership patterns and models that are found in the further development of the church in the New Testament.

The Leadership of the Church

After Christ's ascension to heaven we find apostles and elders leading the church with the help of the offices of deacons and selected widows.

Apostles While elders are leaders of the local church, apostles lead beyond that level. For the definition and the scope of the work of the apostles see section 14.2.5. For our subject two NT sections are of special interest, Gal 2 and Acts 15. Both relate to the same discussion. In Gal 1 Paul puts an emphasis on his being an apostle who has been called directly by Jesus Christ and who was entrusted with the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal 1:1.11-19). In Gal 2:7-10 Paul speaks of an agreement between James, Peter and John on the one hand and Barnabas and Paul on the other:

7 On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised 8 (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), 9 and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

In this agreement the unity of the world wide church, the "catholic" or universal church is shown by the fact that Barnabas and Paul would remember the poor Christian Jews in Jerusalem and Judah and collect money for them in the churches that were planted by them in the Gentile world (Acts 6:1-7; 24:7; Rom 15:26-28; 2 Cor 8-9). At the same time Peter's special "apostolic ministry to the circumcised" is recognized and Paul's special apostolic ministry "to the Gentiles". This seems to imply that Peter would be the au-

thority for doctrinal questions related to the Jewish Christians and Paul the authority for doctrinal questions related to the Gentile Christians.

In Acts 15 the question is whether Gentile Christians have to be circumcised to be saved (Acts 15:1.5). This question had been carried by Jews from Jerusalem and Judea into the mission field which had been reached by Barnabas and Paul so that the two of them had to go to Jerusalem to settle this important question (15:2). They knew the answer which would please God, but they were compelled to come to an agreement with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem as well so that there would be no schism in the worldwide church and that they would have peace and no further trouble in the churches which they had planted.

The so-called *Council of Jerusalem* came together to give an answer to this doctrinal question. It consisted of apostles and elders (15:2.6.22.23). After "there had been much debate" (15:7) important statements were given by the apostles Peter (15:7-11), the apostles Barnabas and Paul (15:12; cf. 14:14) and the apostle James, the brother of the Lord (15:13-21; cf. Gal 1:19). The resolution of this council was written down and sent to Gentile churches and received with joy (15:23-31; 16:4-5).

The problem and the way it was solved shows the trans-regional and international influence of the apostles. Jerusalem was involved as the mother-church of Christianity. Antioch was important as the sending church of the missionary team of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:26-15:1; 13:1-4). God used the apostles who worked in different regions to solve the issue and maintain the world wide vision and the unity of the church.

It is interesting to note that the apostles and elders felt guided by the Holy Spirit to solve this difficult problem (Acts 15:28). The council of Jerusalem became an example for later councils to tackle difficult issues that became important for the church. But there are also differences in comparison to later times.

The apostles were eye-witnesses of the risen Jesus Christ (1 Cor 9:1; Acts 1:21-22). With the death of the last apostle, probably John the brother of James and son of Zebedee, the time of the apostles came to an end and the time of the post-apostolic church started. The foundation had been laid (1 Cor 3:11; Eph 2:20) and now others would build on it.

Knowing this it was of the greatest importance that the apostles had

already put a structure of leadership in place that would be there and stand even after the apostles had left. This was the leadership of elders with the support of deacons and the help of the intercession of widows.

Elders. Because the ministry of the apostles was trans-regional, the local church needed elders from the start. Paul and Barnabas would first plant a church, let some time pass by and then appoint elders who had shown themselves as mature and worthy candidates (Acts 14:23; 1 Tm 3:6).

For the same group of leaders of the church four different terms are used in the New Testament: elders, overseers, shepherds and 'those who lead'.

πρεσβύτερος *prēsbytērōs* **elder.** Literally this word means "older" as in Lk 15:25 for the older son (cf. 1 Tm 5:1.2). This term was already used for Israel's leaders in the OT. In the NT it often denotes the members of the Great Sanhedrin, the religious Supreme Court of Israel in Jerusalem (Mt 16:21; 21:23; 26:3.47.57; 27:1.3.12.20; 27:41; 28:12; Acts 4:5.8.23; 6:12; 23:14; 24:1; 25:15). It can also point to "elders" on a local level: Perhaps in Lk 7:3 the elders are the elders of the synagogue in Capernaum.

'Elder' as a term for the leadership of the church is found from Acts onwards in the NT.¹⁷ It denotes the elders of the church in Jerusalem in Acts (15:2.4.6; 15:22.23; 16:4; 21:18, probably also in 11:30). Churches planted by Paul's team also had elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tm 5:17.19; Tit 1:5). James speaks of local elders who can be called by people who are ill (Jas 5:14). Peter exhorts the elders as a fellow elder (1 Pt 5:1.5). John uses the word 'elder' for himself in a special way (2 Jn 1:1; 3 Jn 1:1). Perhaps 'the elder' here is absolute if he was the last apostle alive and therefore the only left eyewitness of many things which the Lord had done.

A special case of eldership are the 24 heavenly elders in Revelation (Rv 4:4.10; 5:5.6.8; 5:11.14; Rv 7:11.13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4). Who they are

17. For whether or not the office 'elder' was borrowed from the synagogue see David W. Miller, "The Uniqueness of New Testament Church Eldership," [accessed November 26, 2014], *Grace Theological Journal* 6, no. 2 (1985): 315–327, http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/gtj/06-2_315.pdf

is for us today a matter of speculation. If they are human and not angels, they could represent the saints of the Old and New Testaments (12 + 12). Compare the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel inscribed on the gates of the new Jerusalem and the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb on the twelve foundations of the wall of this city (Rv 21:12-14). The 24 heavenly elders seem to be a kind of Senate of God in heaven. Somehow it pleased God to include them in his divine rule and let them sit close to him on 24 thrones.

ἐπίσκοπος *ēpiskōpos* **overseer**. The English word 'bishop' originates from this Greek word. But when people say or hear 'bishop' nowadays they think of an important leader of the church who is higher up in the hierarchy than the 'overseer' of the New Testament was. In the NT *ēpiskōpos* designates an elder as in Acts 20:28:

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.¹⁸

The group Paul was talking to were the elders of Ephesus (20:17). Their ministry was to be overseers, to care like a shepherd for the flock of God, His church. This means that we have here the concepts of the elders, overseers and shepherds (= pastors)¹⁹ in one and the same text and for the same people and that in the plural. There was not one pastor / overseer / elder in Ephesus but a plurality of pastors / overseers / elders. These concepts developed apart further down in history. The bishop / overseer became the leader of the pastors, the pastor became the full-time worker of the church, distinguished from a plurality of elders / presbyters who became part of the church council and were lay people. As in Ephesus there was a plurality of elders in Philippi (Phil 1:1).

18. προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ, ἐν ᾧ ὑμᾶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους, ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἣν περιεποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου.

19. 'Pastor' is Latin and means shepherd. See the Vulgate of Eph 4:11.

Any candidate for becoming an overseer needs certain qualities (1 Tm 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9). These lists of qualities are given to help with the appointment of overseers. These lists were not intended in the first place for the removal of "unworthy" overseers. Paul's instructions to Titus imply that the words 'elders' (1:5) and 'overseers' (1:7) are just two different words for the same people who lead the church. Peter calls Jesus 'the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls' (1 Pt 2:25). Jesus is the ultimate example for being a pastor and overseer. He would leave the 99 sheep and go after that one which got lost (Mt 18:12-14).

ποιμήν pōimēn **shepherd**. The heart of Jesus was the heart of a shepherd. He could see the crowds and have compassion on them "because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt 9:36; Mk 6:34). He is the key model for pastoring and he is "the" shepherd (Jn 10:2.11.12; 10:14.16; Heb 13:20; 1 Pt 2:25; Mt 2:6; Rv 7:17; 12:5; 19:15; cf. 2:27).²⁰ When God stroke him the sheep of the flock were scattered (Mt 26:31; Mk 14:27). At his second coming all nations will be gathered before him and he will separate the righteous from the evil as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (Mt 25:32).

In Eph 4:11-12 Paul speaks of four groups of gifted people whom Christ has given to the church:

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the
pastors and teachers,²¹ 12 to equip the saints for the work of
ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

The fourth group is "the pastors (= shepherds) and teachers". Whereas the apostles, prophets and evangelists may work transregional, the "shepherds and teachers" seem to be local ministers of the church (see Acts 20:28).

As a fellow elder and shepherd (Jn 21:16) Peter can admonish the elders (1 Pt 5:2-4):

20. It is a curious detail of salvation history that Bethlehem was the city of David when he was still a shepherd and that Christ, the great and good shepherd, would be born there as Savior and Lord (Lk 2:11) witnessed by a group of shepherds (Lk 2:8.15.18.20).

21. καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους

2 Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

It is right that shepherds feed themselves from the milk of the flock (1 Cor 9:7), that they get a certain salary (1 Tm 5:17-18). But 'shameful gain' should not be their motivation which is more a sign of false teachers (Jude 1:04.11-12).

προϊστάμενος *prōhistamēnōs* **one who leads.** This is another word for the same group of leaders. It is used for overseers (1 Tm 3:4-5) and elders (1 Tm 5:17). One who leads should do this 'with zeal' (Rom 12:8). If somebody wants to lead the church, he must first lead his family well (1 Tm 3:4-5).²² The other members of the church should respect the leaders (1 Thes 5:12). If elders lead well, they should be considered worthy of 'double honor' or a 'double salary' (1 Tm 5:17-18).²³ Perhaps they will not get a double salary, but only a single, because the church is so poor or the people give so poorly. But the people should not think that the salary is too much. They should think that this work is so important that even a double salary would not be too much.

Qualifications of Elders. These are mostly found in 1 Tm 3:1-7 and Tit 1:5-9. In this table the order of the qualities follows 1 Tm 3:1-7 and the qualities of Tit 1:5-9 have been inserted where it fits.

22. According to 1 Tm 3:12 this is also a qualification for the deacons.

23. The word for 'honor' here, *timē*, is also used for the price of something (Acts 5:2) or the 'honor' shown in giving material things to somebody (Mt 15:4-6). That exactly this is the meaning is shown by the statements in the next verse (5:18).

	1 Tm 3:1-7	Tit 1:5-9
1	ἀνεπίλημπτον	ἀνέγκλητος, ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμον
2	μιᾷς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα	μιᾷς γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ
3	νηφάλιον	
4	σώφρονα	σώφρονα
5	κόσμιον	
6	φιλόξενον	φιλόξενον
7	διδασκικόν	ἀντεχόμενον τοῦ κατὰ τὴν διδασκίαν πιστοῦ λόγου, ἵνα δυνατὸς ᾖ καὶ παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ καὶ τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἐλέγχειν.
8	μὴ πάροινον	μὴ πάροινον
9	μὴ πλήκτην	μὴ πλήκτην
10	ἀλλὰ ἐπιεικῇ	
11	ἄμαχον	μὴ ὀργίλον
12	ἀφιλάργυρον	μὴ αἰσχροκερδῆ
13	τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος	τέκνα ἔχων πιστά, μὴ ἐν κατηγορίᾳ ἀσωτίας ἢ ἀνυπότακτα
14	μὴ νεόφυτον	
15	μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἑξωθεν	
16		μὴ αὐθάδη
17		φιλάγαθον
18		δίκαιον
19		ὁσιον
20		ἐγκρατῆ

	1 Tm 3:1-7	Tit 1:5-9
1	above reproach	above reproach, must be above reproach as God's steward
2	the husband of one wife	the husband of one wife
3	sober-minded	
4	self-controlled	self-controlled
5	respectable	
6	hospitable	hospitable
7	able to teach	He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.
8	not a drunkard	not a drunkard
9	not violent	not violent
10	but gentle	
11	not quarrelsome	not quick-tempered
12	not a lover of money	not greedy for gain
13	he must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive	his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination
14	not a recent convert	
15	well thought of by outsiders	
16		not arrogant
17		a lover of good
18		upright
19		holy
20		disciplined

Responsibilities of Elders. If we look at all the titles of the elders / overseers / shepherds / those who lead and if we look at all the sections where these words are used, we get a pretty clear picture of the responsibilities of these leaders. They have to care for God's assembly, the sheep of His flock. Three key areas of the work of a shepherd are 1. leading, 2. protecting, 3. nourishing (Ps 23:1-6; Jn 10:1-30). These three areas are also related to the teaching ministry of the elders who lead, protect and nourish through their teaching amongst other things they do.

1. Leading (1 Tm 5:17)

- (a) Leading by example (1 Pt 5:3)
 - (b) Guiding (Jn 10:3-4.27)
2. Protecting
- (a) from enemies without (persecution; 1 Pt 1:1-5:14)
 - (b) from enemies within (false doctrine; Act 20:28-31; Rv 2:2.6; 2:14-16; 2:20-15)
3. Nourishing (Jn 21:15.17; 1 Cor 3:2; Heb 5:12-14)
4. Teaching (1 Tm 3:2; 5:17; Tit 1:9)
- (a) Training (Eph 4:11-12)
 - (b) Discipling (2 Tm 2:2; Phil 4:9)

Deacons The noun δῆακονος diakōnōs means 'servant'.²⁴ If it is the designation of an office in the church it can be translated with 'deacon' (1 Tm 3:8.12; Phil 1:1) or 'deaconess' (Rom 16:1), but, of course, this still means 'servant'.

Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs (Rom 15:8). God the Father will honor a servant of Jesus Christ who follows Christ on the way of his suffering (Jn 12:26). Whoever wants to be great amongst the disciples should humble himself and become a servant of others (Mt 20:26; 23:11; Mk 9:35; 10:43).

'Servants' who spread the gospel are the apostle Paul (1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 3:6; 6:4; 11:23; Eph 3:7; Col 1:23.25), Apollos (1 Cor 3:5), Tychicus (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7), Epaphras (Col 1:7) and Timothy (1 Thes 3:2, 1 Tm 4:6).

The sections which speak of deacons as office bearers in the church are 1 Tm 3:8.12, Phil 1:1 and Rom 16:1. There were several 'overseers' in Philippi and several 'deacons' (Phil 1:1). Phoebe was a female deacon (or a deaconess; Rom 16:1).

24. For the study of the related words "to serve, service" see subsection 15.4.3).

Qualifications for Deacons. Of special importance is what Paul wrote to Timothy about the qualifications for deacons (1 Tm 3:8-13). Some of the qualifications are similar to those for the overseers in 3:1-7. Interesting is that the deacons should be tested first, "then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless" (3:10).

1 Tm 3:8-13		
8	σεμνούς μὴ διλόγους μὴ οἶνω πολλῷ προσ- έχοντας μὴ αἰσχροκερδεῖς	dignified not double-tongued not addicted to much wine not greedy for dishonest gain
9	ἔχοντας τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως ἐν καθαρᾷ συνειδήσει	hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience
10	καὶ οὗτοι δὲ δοκιμα- ζέσθωσαν πρώτον, εἴτα διακονεῖτωσαν ἀνέγκλητοι ὄντες	And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.
11	γυναῖκας ὡσαύτως σεμνάς, μὴ διαβόλους, νηφαλίους, πιστάς ἐν πᾶσιν	(Their) wives likewise must be dig- nified, not slanderers, but sober- minded, faithful in all things.
12	διάκονοι ἕστωσαν μιᾷς γυναικὸς ἄνδρες τέκνων καλῶς προϊσ- τάμενοι καὶ τῶν ἰδίων οἴκων	Let deacons each be the husband of one wife managing their children and their own households well

The women Paul is talking about in 3:11 could be either the wives of the deacons or female deacons or deaconesses (cf. Rom 16:1). Both is possible.

Services of Deacons. If we ask ourselves what kind of services the deacons rendered, we can look at our word studies of diakōnēō, diakōnia and diakōnōs. If the local church was engaged in helping widows or the poor (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tm 5:9-16), then the deacons would very much 'serve tables' and help people in physical needs. This was probably one important area. But at the same time we see Stephen and Philipp also as serving with the word (Acts 6:8-10; 7:1-53; 8:5-40).

This means that the service of the deacons may have been mixed. Part of it was helping with food and drink and in other physical needs. Another

part was serving people in the area of spiritual needs. Their service in the area of spiritual needs would depend on their gifts. Philipp for example was an evangelist (Acts 21:8) and did signs (Acts 8:6). Stephen did wonders and signs and had great wisdom to convince people (Acts 6:8-10).

Widows. A widow (χήρα *chēra*) in the NT is often an example of somebody who is poor and belongs to the weakest in society. A queen living in luxury is the opposite of being a widow (Rv 18:7). To care for widows and orphans is part of the essence of serving God (Jas 1:27). To oppress widows and rob them is the essence of being evil (Mk 12:40; Lk 20:47). God's special mercy on a poor and weak widow is seen in God's raising her only son from death in the Old Testament (Lk 4:25-26, see 1 Kgs 17:17-24) and in the New (Lk 7:12). The gospel presents widows as good examples of prayer and fasting (Lk 2:37), of persistence in prayer (Lk 18:3.5) and of loving God in spite of poverty (Mk 12:42-43; Lk 21:2-3). Because of her love for God a widow may decide to stay single (1 Cor 7:8).

Obedying the teaching of Christ to help the poor his church cared for widows from the start (Acts 6:1; 9:39.41). This is also implied in Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 5:3-16, but this section contains much more than the idea of helping poor widows. It presents us with a group of elected widows who are supported by the church on the one hand but are also offering or have offered a service to the church which is honored and recognized while they are supported. They have to fulfill certain criteria in a similar way as we have seen in 1 Timothy 3 with regard to the overseers and the deacons. They seem to have a special spiritual stand within the church.

Qualifications for widows.

	1 Tm 5:3-16	
5	ἡ ὄντως χήρα	who is truly a widow
5	μεμονωμένη	left all alone (without living children or grandchildren, see 5:4)
5	ἠλπικεν ἐπὶ θεόν	has set her hope on God
5	προσμένει ταῖς δεήσεσιν καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς νυκ- τός καὶ ἡμέρας	continues in supplications and prayers night and day
7	ἀνεπίλημπτοι	without reproach
9	μὴ ἔλαττον ἐτῶν ἑξήκοντα	not less than sixty years of age
9	γεγονυῖα ἐνὸς ἀνδρὸς γυνή	having been the wife of one husband
10	ἐν ἔργοις καλοῖς μαρτυ- ρουμένη, εἰ ἐτεκνοτρόφησεν, εἰ ἐξενοδόχησεν, εἰ ἁγίων πόδας ἔνιψεν, εἰ θλιβομένοις ἐπήρκεσεν, εἰ παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ ἐπ- ηκολούθησεν.	having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.

The fact that a widow who is enrolled in the list of those widows who are supported by the church (5:9) has "been the wife of one husband" before she became a widow, can help us to understand the qualifications for overseers (3:2) and deacons (3:12) who have to be husband of one wife. Overseers, deacons and chosen widows should be "without reproach" (3:2; 5:7) or "blameless" (3:10) and should reflect the ethical ideal of monogamy. It is possible that Paul here excludes divorced and remarried persons.

The honored calling of chosen widows. A look at the qualifications of the chosen widows of the church shows that their status is an honorable and of a high calling. True widows are worthy of honor (5:3). Whenever people are so poor that they need help, there is the danger that they lose their self-respect and suffer even more feeling as people without honor. It is interesting that God used the writing of the apostle Paul to secure a place of honor for single, widowed and impoverished ladies within the church of God, which is the house of God, the temple of God (3:15).

Every widow who "has set her hope on God and continues in suppli-

cations and prayers night and day" becomes part of the spiritual power house of the church. Every local church who cares for such widows in the way shown by the apostle Paul and integrating them into the life of the church, may hope to see rich blessings of God on this approach.

16.3 **Role of Women in the Church**

For male and female in the image of God see subsection 8.1.5.

16.3.1 **In the Old Testament**

Social Structure

Within the law of God given through Moses there is the section about vows (Nm 30:3-16) which displays the social structure of the Old Testament with regard to women very well.

Unmarried women. The vow of an unmarried daughter living with her father is confirmed by him if he hears it and keeps silent or is made null and void if he hears it and opposes it (Nm 30:3-5).

Married women. The vow of a married woman is confirmed by her husband if he hears it and keeps silent or is made null and void by him if he hears it and opposes it (Nm 30:6-8).

Divorced women. The vow of a divorced woman is always valid (Nm 30:9).

Widows. The vow of a widow is always valid (Nm 30:9).

Summary: This section shows that an unmarried woman living with her father is under the authority of her father and a married woman is under the authority of her husband. But a divorced woman or a widow is free from male authority. Her vow is always valid.

Offices and gifts

Some of the offices and gifts in the Old Testament were male-dominated, others were open for females.

Priests. Priests had to be males from the tribe of Levi and especially the clan of Aaron. There were no female priests according to the law of Moses (Ex 28:1-29:37; Lv 8:1-36; Nm 25:11-13; 1 Sm 2:27-36; 1 Kgs 2:27; 1:32-39; Jer 33:18,22).

Prophets. There were good female prophetesses like Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron (Ex 15:20), Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth (Jgs 4:4)²⁵, and Huldah, the wife of Shallum (2 Kgs 22:14; 2 Chr 34:22) and the wife of Isaiah (Is 8:3). There were also negative prophetesses like Noadiah (Neh 6:14).

Judges. In the book of Judges there are twelve Judges. One of them is the famous Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth who was both a prophetess and a judge (Jgs 4:4).

Kings. Judah was to be ruled by males from the tribe of Judah and especially the clan of David (2 Sm 7:11-18). The rule of Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah was not legitimate and she is not reckoned as queen (2 Kgs 11:1). The northern kingdom of Israel was ruled by kings. It could happen that a wife of a king became very influential, like Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians who became king Ahab's wife (1 Kgs 16:31). But she is not reckoned as a good example to follow.

Soldiers. In God's law the age for military action is twenty years and older (Nm 1:3,20,24 etc.). Only men were counted to be part of the army. There were no regular female soldiers. But it could happen that women might partake in defending a city (Jgs 9:53) or do something decisive to secure the victory of Israel in times of war (Jgs 5:24-27; Joshua 2:4-6).

25. Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

Wise women. There are quite a few examples of wise or clever women in the history books of the Old Testament, as for example Abigail (1 Sm 25:18-34) or the woman that saved the city Abel of Beth-maacah with her wisdom (2 Sm 20:15-22).

16.3.2 In the New Testament

Social Structure

When it comes to the social structure within the New Testament there seems to be a tendency to point back to texts from the Old Testament. Peter does it ("as Sarah obeyed Abraham", 1 Pt 3:5-6) and Paul ("as the Law also says"; 1 Cor 14:34).

Unmarried girls. As in the Old Testament unmarried girls can be found living with their fathers (Acts 21:8-9). One understanding of 1 Cor 7:36-38 is that the father is part of the decision making process whether "his virgin daughter" is going to marry or not.²⁶ Another is that it is the man who is engaged to marry "his virgin" but is willing to stay single.²⁷ In either understanding the girl is understood to be content and willing to stay single. There is a gift of staying single (1 Cor 7:7-8; Mt 19:11-12). Because of this gift of the Spirit the church may at any time have a great number of single ladies who survive their parents or who do not stay with their parents. In analogy to the widows or divorced women of the Old Testament these single ladies are neither under the authority of their father nor of a husband. They are directly responsible to God.

Married women. In the New Testament married women are seen as being under the authority of their husband (Eph 5:22-24.33; Col 3:18; 1 Cor 11:3; 14:34-35; 1 Tm 2:11-15; 1 Pt 3:1-6). The statement in Eph 5:21 "submitting

26. So according to John Calvin, *I Corinthians*, Calvin's Commentaries, Torrance, D. W.; Torrance, Th. F. <ed>; Fraser, J. W. <trans> (Edinburgh, 1980), p. 164-168.

27. So according to F. E. Gaebelin, *The Expositors Bible Commentary: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians*, vol. 10, Harrison, E. F. and Mare, W. H. and Murray, J. H. and Boice, J. M. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1976), p. 236-237.

to one another out of reverence for Christ" is showing that one result of the being filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18) is that everyone submits in the area where God wants him to submit to the authority God has placed in Christ over him: the woman under their husband (5:22), the children under their parents (6:1), the slaves under their masters (6:5), and the citizens under the government (Rom 13:1; 1 Pt 2:13-14).

Divorced women. As in the Old Testament divorced women are directly responsible to God (1 Cor 7:15-16).

Widows As in the Old Testament widows are directly responsible to God. They may experience the special care of the church if the spiritual life of the church is vibrant and caring and they fit the high spiritual standards to become elected to be a widow on the list of the church to be supported (1 Tm 5:3-16; Acts 6:1-6).

Summary: This means that in the New Testament daughters living with their father and married women are under the male authority of the father or the husband respectively. But divorced women, widows and unmarried ladies not living with their father are directly responsible to God. Or to put it in a language leaned on 1 Cor 11:3:

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

The chain of authority for a married woman is the following: the woman is under her husband, who is under Christ, who is under God the Father. The unmarried woman in the house of her father is under her father who is under Christ who is under God the Father. The widow or divorced woman or unmarried woman not living with her father is directly under the authority of Christ who is under God the Father.

Offices and gifts

Some of the offices and gifts in the New Testament are male-dominated, others are open for females.

Sons and daughters of God. One of the most important verses for the modern discussion about the role of women in the church is the verse of the apostle Paul in Gal 3:28. Let us look at it within the context (Gal 3:24-29):

24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.²⁸ 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

The subject in the context is the justification by faith (3:24) so that people who are justified by faith prove themselves to belong to the spiritual offspring of Abraham and are heirs (3:29) of the promised blessings of Abraham for all nations (3:6-9.14). An important part of these blessings is the privilege to be a son or a daughter of God with the full legal rights of an heir (Gal 4:6-7, 2 Cor 6:18). It is significant that the "daughters" are full heirs of the blessings of the coming world (Rom 4:13; 1 Pt 3:7). In Christ nationality (being Jew or Greek), social status (being slave or free) or gender (being male or female) does not matter, "for you are all one in Christ Jesus".

That does not mean however that, while the church is still on her way to the promised country and heritage, it has no influence on life or ethics whether one is Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or free. When it comes to ethics and practical life, Paul makes a distinction between slaves (Eph

28. οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλλην, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

6:5-8; Col 3:22-25; cf. 1 Pt 2:18-25) and masters (Eph 6:09; Col 4:1). The same is true for married women. As we have seen, in the New Testament married women are seen as being under the authority of their husband (Eph 5:22-24.33; Col 3:18; 1 Cor 11:3; 14:34-35; 1 Tm 2:11-15; 1 Pt 3:1-6).

Every Christian married woman is a citizen of two worlds. In this world she has the authority of her husband over herself and as mother she has together with her husband parental authority over her children. But in the world to come there is no such thing as married life (Mt 22:30; Mk 12:25; Lk 20:35-36) or family life as we know it. Some experiences of Christian women relate to the order of the old creation, as for example giving birth to children with birth pangs. Other experiences relate to the order of the new world, which has already started for them with their spiritual new birth (Gal 4:6).

Priests. When it comes to individuals who are called priests in the New Testament church, there is only Jesus Christ who is called "a high priest after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:10). Of course, there are the priests in the Jerusalem temple, but their leadership opposed Christ and had him crucified and their service has ceased with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (cf. Heb 7:11-12). All individuals of the church are spoken together of as priests or as a priesthood (1 Pt 2:9; Rv 5:9-10).

Kings. Jesus is called king of the Jews (Mt 2:1-2; 27:37) or of the house of Jacob (Lk 1:32-33) or King of kings and Lord of lords (Rv 19:16). The worldly governments of the kingdoms of this world in this time are arranged by God (Rom 13:1). All individuals of the church are spoken together of as kings or as a kingdom (1 Pt 2:9; Rv 5:9-10). This is not an individual way of speaking, more the whole church taken together. One exception is that the twelve apostles will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mt 19:28). Because the way of speaking is normally more a general for the members of the church with regard to priesthood and kingship, we better leave it at this general level and do not go into the details of being king or queen or priests as individuals, as males or females. The spiritual reality is already a present reality (Rom 8:30), but the whole dimension of the glory

of this state of the children of God is left for the future to be revealed (Rom 8:16-23; 2 Cor 6:18).

Judges. The saints are also called to judge the world and angels (1 Cor 6:2-3). This seems also related to the future glory of the saints as kings and priests. We leave the details to the future fulfillment.

Apostles. The twelve apostles of Jesus were all men (Mt 10:2-4; Acts 1:13). Barnabas and Paul are also called apostles (Acts 14:14; 1 Cor 9:1-2). In spite of the fact that some see in Junia of Rom 16:7 an example of a female apostle, this verse is not as clear and the people not as famous that this could be understood as settled.

Prophets. Two prophetesses are mentioned in the New Testament using the noun in Greek, one is Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher and she is a good example (Lk 2:36) and the other is "that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols" who is obviously a very bad example (Rv 2:20). The verb is used in the following verses with women as subjects: "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy... even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy (Acts 2:17.18). In Acts 21:9 we are told that the four unmarried daughters of Philip were prophesying. 1 Cor 11:5 speaks of wives who pray or prophesy. As the gift of prophecy is especially given to build up the church (1 Cor 14:4; 12:7), we can assume that women could also practise their gift in the assembly or church. This has been used to argue in favor of women preaching in church, especially combined with 1 Cor 14:3:

On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

The idea is the following: Somebody who speaks for the upbuilding and encouragement and consolation of the congregation is prophesying and we call this nowadays preaching. Women who have the gift of prophecy should

be allowed to preach. But here seems to be some kind of misunderstanding. Not every talk for the upbuilding and encouragement and consolation of the congregation is prophesying. You can say a cow is a mammal. But not every mammal is a cow. Prophecy should happen for the upbuilding, encouragement, admonition and consolation of the congregation. But not every talk which does this, is already a prophecy. Paul explains in the same chapter that one element of prophecy is that the person speaks about things she can not humanly know, but only by the inspiration of God's Spirit (1 Cor 14:24-25):

24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters,
he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, 25 the
secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face,
he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

Prophecy is about knowing secrets, regarding the past, the present or the future. It is a knowledge given by God's Spirit to man for the progress of the church. In the Old or in the New Testament a prophet or a prophetess can say: "Thus says the Lord:..." or "Thus says the Holy Spirit..." (Jer 7:3; Acts 21:11). Decisive is not whether the speaker is a man or a woman, but that he or she is inspired by God's Spirit. The real speaker is God. Prophecy is not just preaching. It is proclaiming the word of God under a special inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Evangelists The noun evangelist is only used thrice in the New Testament, for Philip (Acts 21:8) for Timothy (2 Tm 4:5) and in a general way (Eph 4:11).

The verb may be used with the name of some individual as a subject, as e.g. an angel in Lk 1:19 or in Rv 14:6, John the Baptist (Lk 3:18), Jesus (Lk 4:18.43, Eph 2:17), the twelve apostles (Acts 5:42), or without giving further details about the people who spread the gospel (Acts 8:4; 1 Pt 1:12), Philip (Acts 8:12.35.40), God through Jesus Christ (Acts 10:36) or God to his servants, the prophets (Rv 10:7), men of Cyprus and Cyrene (Acts 11:20), Paul and his team (Acts 13:32 et al.). Such people need a calling (Rom 10:15).

I have given this detailed information about those who spread the gospel, because among those many given names is not one sister included as a subject of the verb.²⁹

It can be argued, of course, that they might be included in the plural verbforms where no name is given. Still, as far as names are given together with the noun evangelist or with the verb to evangelize we have only brothers amongst the humans. But other sections make it clear that sisters took a strong part in spreading the gospel, as we can see in Phil 4:2-3:

2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. 3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.³⁰

Pastor-teachers. There is no New Testament example for a female pastor, which means literally shepherd, or an overseer, or an elder, or somebody who stands in front to lead. These four expressions are used in the New Testament for the group of leaders of a local church (see Acts 20:17,28; Tit 1:5-9; 1 Tm 3:1-7; 5:17; Eph 4:11).

Deacons. In 1 Tm 3:8-13 there is a section about the qualifications of deacons, which means servants. A verse like 3:12 speaks of male deacons:

29. In the Old Testament we have the very interesting promise of God in Ps 68:11 "The Lord gives the word; the women who announce the news are a great host". The women who announce the news are announcing good news (תְּבוֹנֹת; LXX: ευαγγελιζομενοις).

It is remarkable that Paul uses Psalm 68,18 in Eph 4,8-10 to lay the foundation for his teaching about the gifts of the Spirit in Ephesians 4, including the gift of evangelists in 4,11. Paul identifies Jesus Christ as the LORD of Ps 68,18 who has ascended on high. If you then read the whole of Psalm 68 you find the action of evangelization in it as well. And the "army" who does evangelize is made up of women who tell the good news.

30. ναὶ ἐρωτῶ καὶ σέ, γνήσιε σύζυγε, συλλαμβάνου αὐταῖς, αἵτινες ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθλησάν μοι μετὰ καὶ Κλήμεντος καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν συνεργῶν μου, ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα ἐν βίβλῳ ζῶῃς.

Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.

But Rom 16:1-2 speak of sister Phoebe as a deacon:

1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae,³¹ 2 that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.

Such paragraphs written by Paul's hand make it abundantly clear that the churches planted by the apostle Paul and his team heavily encouraged the services of female Christian workers.

Soldiers. In the New Testament the people of God "do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12)³². Of course, there is the necessity of a worldly authority instituted by God with the power of the sword (Rom 13:1-7).

But with regard to the church of God, the people of God, their task is to be spiritual soldiers, praying, loving, glorifying God with holy lives. We have already seen in Phil 4:2-3 that the two Christian ladies Euodia and Syntyche were part of the spiritual struggle³³ to bring the gospel to the hearts of people (cf. Phil 1:27).

Wise women. One good example for wise women in the New Testament is Priscilla who is always mentioned together with her husband Aquila, in

31. Συνίστημι δὲ ὑμῖν Φοίβην τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, οὗσαν καὶ διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς,

32. ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκοτοῦς τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις.

33. αἵτινες ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθλησάν μοι μετὰ καὶ Κλήμεντος καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν συνεργῶν μου

Acts with the long form of her name Priscilla, (Acts 18:2,18,26) and in the letters of Paul with the short form Prisca (Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tm 4:19). In Acts 18:2 her husband is introduced and then his wife Priscilla. In Acts 18:18 and 26 the wife is mentioned first. In the letters of Paul the wife is twice mentioned first. Of special interest is Acts 18:26:

He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

Apollos was a very clever and well trained person, a very good public speaker (Acts 18:24-25; 1 Cor 3:6,22; 4:6). But he learned even more through this couple. It is clear that the wife was at least part of the teaching process, perhaps even the more capable person for teaching, being mentioned first. Seeing this section (and e.g. Tit 2:3-5) nobody could claim that in the New Testament sisters are not capable of teaching. But it is also interesting that the setting of this teaching process is the home of this Jewish couple. They did not confront Apollos publicly, but invited him to their home and used this time of fellowship to help him grow even more. This is part of the cleverness and wisdom of this interesting couple.

Restrictions for women in the New Testament? Are there things which restrict the service of Christian women in the New Testament?

Female apostles, pastors, elders? According to our analysis there were no female apostles, no female pastors, elders, overseers in the New Testament church.

Absolute female silence in church? We do not understand the commandment of Paul in 1 Cor 14:33-37 that women should keep silent as an absolute, but as a relative commandment. Paul implies that women can pray and prophesy in 1 Cor 11:5. Because the gift of prophecy is a gift to give progress to the church, I understand that both the prophecies and the prayers of women were a normal part of public services. In 1 Cor 14:27-35 Paul commands three times that certain people keep silent in the assembly (vv. 28,30,34):

27 If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. 28 But if there is no one to interpret, *let each of them keep silent in church* and speak to himself and to God. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.³⁴ 30 If a revelation is made to another sitting there, *let the first be silent*. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, 32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. 33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, 34 *the women should keep silent in the churches*. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

If there is no interpreter, the person speaking in a tongue should keep silent (28). If somebody receives a revelation, the prophet, who wanted to say something should keep silent (30). If the others weigh or examine critically what a prophet has said (29), the women should keep silent (34) and the husbands should do the talking. Otherwise this could become the cause of broken relationships between the different families of the church.

Should women teach in church? How can we understand Paul's meaning in 1 Tm 2:11-15:

11 Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve; 14 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. 15 Yet she will be saved through childbearing - if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

34. προφηῆται δὲ δύο ἢ τρεῖς λαλείτωσαν, καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι διακρινέτωσαν•

Firstly we have to realize that "woman" here means married woman which is evident by the context of "childbearing". The "submissiveness" is then first towards her own husband (cf. Eph 5:22; Col 3:18; 1 Pt 3:1) and secondly also in the church service towards the people who are in charge to lead the service (1 Cor 14:33-35).

Secondly the context is about teaching in church in a way that the exercising of authority over a man is implied. We think of teaching in church because 1 Tm 2:1.8-10 seem to speak of intercession and behavior of men and women in the church service. Paul talks of authoritative teaching which has to be obeyed. Paul rejects this task for a married woman because she would leave her submissiveness. In other places he encourages women to teach (Tit 2:3-5) which shows that they might have the gift of teaching and the ability to do it.

Thirdly Paul goes back to Gn 2 and 3 to give this teaching a foundation in creation and salvation history. "For Adam was formed first, then Eve" is an argument that Eve was made for Adam (cf. 1 Cor 11:7-9) and that Adam was to be the head of the family even before the fall. "... and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" gives an argument based on how sin came into the world. The phrase "was deceived"³⁵ is taken from the LXX Gn 3:13.³⁶ The enemy successfully attacked first the wife of Adam, Eve, in his sinister plan to sow the seed of doubt towards the word of God into human hearts. From this Paul draws the conclusion that authoritative teaching should be done by men (cf. Gn 3:16).

Fourthly the "Yet she will be saved through childbearing - if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control" is to be understood with Gn 3:15-16 in mind. One consequence of the fall were the troubles of pregnancy and giving birth for the mothers. These are difficult hours. God can make this difficult experience be something related to salvation and not against it. In the first half of the verse the verb is in the singular, still pointing to the woman per se, Eve. But in the second part of the verse the verb is in the plural, pointing to the modern counterparts of Eve, the women and

35. 14 καὶ Ἀδὰμ οὐκ ἠπατήθη, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἐξαπατηθεῖσα ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν.

36. καὶ εἶπεν ἡ γυνὴ Ὁ ὄφις ἠπάτησέν με, καὶ ἔφαγον.

mothers of today. Eve gave birth to children, opening up the line leading to the ultimate seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, the savior. Salvation in Christ is related to faith, love and holiness. The modern counterparts of Eve can also hope for being kept safe through the process of childbearing, while looking up to God for help.

Fifthly this verse has also to be understood against the backdrop of gnostic heretic teachings Paul is fighting in these letters, especially the teaching that it is forbidden to marry (1 Tm 4:3; 6:20-21; 1:19-20; 2 Tm 2:16-18). The Gnostics had the tendency to be against God's good creation, including sexuality. They might have pointed to the birth pangs as proof that sex and marriage are evil and to be avoided. Therefore Paul's statement, "Yet she will be saved through childbearing - if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control", could be anti-gnostic, refuting their hatred of the married state and emphasizing that it is in full agreement with being saved.

Chapter 17

Christ's Second Coming

17.1 The Last Days

17.1.1 The Last Days in the Old Testament

In the Torah

The last days is a phrase which is seen first in Genesis 49:1:

Then Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come."

The phrase "in days to come" is literally "in the end of the days", see the Hebrew¹ which the King James Version gives as "in the last days".² The text of the Septuagint³ is translated by NETS⁴ with "at the last of the days".

1. בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים

2. The King James Version is given according to KJV, The Holy Bible - King James Version, the Hebrew text according to OpenScriptures.org, ed., Westminster Leningrad Codex, [accessed September 1, 2012], 2010, <http://www.crosswire.org/sword/modules/ModInfo.jsp?modName=OSMHB>, and the LXX according to Alfred Rahlfs, ed., Septuaginta, Ninth (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung Stuttgart, 1971).

3. ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν

4. If not otherwise noted the English translation of the Septuagint text is given according to Pietersma and Wright, A New English Translation of the Septuagint.

In this context the dying Jacob (Gen 49:28-33) gives his sons his last blessing which proves later to be prophetic. For the progress of salvation history it is interesting that he prophesies (Gen 49:10) that the kingdom will belong to the tribe of Judah:

The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

Within the Torah the person who starts the teaching about things "in the last days" is Jacob. The next time we see this phrase in the Torah it is used by Balaam in Nm 24:14:

And now, behold, I am going to my people. Come, I will
let you know what this people will do to your people in the
latter days.

For the last four words of this quote we literally have again in the Hebrew original "in the end of the days"⁵. The Septuagint has "at the end of days".⁶

In the context Balaam had been called by Balak, the king of Moab, to curse Israel (Nm 24:10). Balak's hope then was to fight the Israelites victoriously (Nm 22:6). It is interesting to see Balaam, this strange figure who came because of his love for money (2 Pt 2:15) and still delivers a great last prophecy reaching very far into the future (Nm 24:17-24).

This prophecy had its application at that time regarding the defeat of Moab, and the consequent shock to its king. It is also about the far future in the same verse which fits the Messianic hope of the Old Testament and the idea that it relates to "the last days".

After Jacob and Balaam and still within the Pentateuch Moses also speaks about the last days in Deuteronomy 4:30:

When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon

5. בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים

6. ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν

you in the latter days,⁷ you will return to the Lord your God and obey his voice.

The context speaks of Israel's going astray and committing idolatry (4:25) and God punishing them with exile accordingly (4:26-28). But if they are in exile and repent (4:29), God will have mercy on them because of his covenant (4:31). The phrase "in the end of the days" in 4:30 gives the time frame for this.

The next time Moses uses this phrase is in Dt 31:29 in a very similar context:

For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And in the days to come⁸ evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands.

There are quite a few parallels between Jacob and Moses within the Pentateuch here. The dying Jacob spoke of the last days, so does Moses. Jacob gave his blessings on the 12 tribes, so does Moses (Dt 33). Both sections are part of the closure of Deuteronomy and Genesis respectively.

Dt 31:29 is part of the introduction for the song of Moses in Dt 32 which then speaks of the days to come, including the far future. Israel will turn away from God (32:15-16). God will punish them for this (32:19ff), but in the end he will have mercy on them again (32:36ff). Compare this to Dt 30:1-6 where God will gather them from the punishment of exile and circumcise their hearts.

In 8th century prophets

The next time we encounter the phrase is in the 8th century prophets Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. God speaks through Hosea in 3:4-5:

7. For "in the latter days" the Hebrew has literally "in the end of the days" בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים ; the LXX reads ἐπ' ἐσχάτῳ τῶν ἡμερῶν which is translated "in the end of days".

8. For "in the days to come" the Hebrew has "in the end of the days" בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים ; the LXX translates "at the end of days" ἐσχάτον τῶν ἡμερῶν.

4 For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. 5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days.⁹

The time of Hosea's service is given in 1:1. The place of Hosea's service, at least in the beginning, was the northern kingdom of Israel, not Judah. So the fact that the "children of Israel" will seek the "Lord their God" and "David their king" points to a deep change from the state of affairs in his own time. Hosea sees this happening "in the end of days". He also predicts an exile and the return of Israelites from Egypt and Assyria which makes him agree with the basic prophecies of Moses we have seen before in Deuteronomy (Hos 11:11).

His contemporary Isaiah who served in Jerusalem and Judah also delivered a message about the last days (Is 2:1-4):

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 It shall come to pass in the latter days¹⁰
that the mountain of the house of the Lord
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,

3 and many peoples shall come, and say:
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go the law,

9. For "in the latter days" the Hebrew has literally "in the end of the days" בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים; the LXX translates "in the last days" ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν.

10. For "in the latter days" the Hebrew has literally "in the end of the days" בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים; the LXX translates "in the last days" ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις.

and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
4 He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

The time and place of Isaiah's prophetic service is given in Is 1:1. He served in Jerusalem from 740 B.C. at least (Is 6:1) under Uzziah to 701 B.C. (Is 36:1) under Hezekiah. The section in 2:1-5 forms together with 1:1-31 the introduction to the whole book. In Chapter One we see the state of Jerusalem and Judah at the time of Isaiah: They are children of God who deny their father and have less sense than a donkey (1:2-3). Spiritually they are like Sodom and Gomorrah, not really willing to hear the word of the Lord or the law of God (1:9-10). It is only God's grace that Jerusalem is still left as a remnant in a destroyed country (1:7-8).

The tension between Chapter One and 2:1-5 leads to a question: How is it possible that the corrupt and Sodom-like Jerusalem of Chapter One at the time of Isaiah will be transformed to be like the Jerusalem of the end times: the worship center of the world uniting all Gentiles and all of Israel to serve the true God peacefully? The answer to this question is given by the whole book: It is through the word of God (2:3; 42:4) and the Messiah (9:6-7; 11:1-10) by the power of the Holy Spirit (44:3-4), after God's judgments have fulfilled their purpose (6:11-13; 26:8-9).

As in Hosea's prophecy, the exile is included in the judgments (Is 5:13; 6:12). Isaiah's vision reaches very far, including new heavens and a new earth (Is 65-66). If somebody might wonder how Isaiah could look as far as that, the answer is found in Is 46:9-10. It is God speaking:

Remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me,
10 declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,

and I will accomplish all my purpose.'

Micah is another contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah. This section in 4:1-5 is a very close parallel to Is 2:1-5 as anyone can see who compares them. Within the context of the book of Micah¹¹ this prophecy of Jerusalem's future glory stands in contrast to the destruction of the city at the end of Micah 3, namely verses 9-12.

The tension between Micah 3 and Micah 4:1-5 is very similar to what we have seen in Is 1 and Is 2:1-5. The question arises: How will God bring this about that the destroyed Jerusalem¹² of Micah 3:12 will become the world center of spreading the good news and transforming the nations to servants of God? Again, as in Isaiah and Hosea, the coming Messiah has a crucial role in this (Mi 5:2-5a).

We can say that Micah has a similar view of future developments as Hosea and Isaiah have. There is a time of punishment from God for their sins, including an exile. In exile they repent and God's mercy leads them home. The Messiah is born from a woman and brings about eternal peace (Mi 5:3.5; Is 7:14; 9:6-7). Jerusalem becomes the world center of a mankind serving God (Mi 4:1-5; Is 2:1-5).

Close to the exile and into the exile

The last sections about the "last days" in the Old Testament bring us near the exile and into the exile. Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel continue the teaching about the last days. We find in Jer 23:20

The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has accom-

11. For our purposes here it is not necessary to decide where this prophecy originated first or whether it was given simultaneously to both prophets as a double witness affirming the certainty of the fulfillment of this promise. The prophecy is an integral part of the context of the book of Isaiah and of the book of Micah as well. As it is our duty to hear the prophetic message within the context of each book, we may well appreciate both of them within their given contexts.

12. According to 4:10 Jerusalem is exiled to Babylon and redeemed from there again. This agrees with Isaiah and Hosea as well who also predict an exile.

plished the intents of his heart. In the latter days¹³ you will understand it clearly.

According to Jer 1:2 Jeremiah was called in the 13th year of Josiah, king of Judah (627 B.C.).¹⁴ He served more than 40 years as a prophet, much of the time suffering from his contemporaries.

The context of Jer 23:20 is the section "concerning the prophets" (23:9-40). Much of this is against false prophets and their ways. Jeremiah's prophecies about those false prophets are part of a series of prophecies about the leaders of Judah, including the wicked kings (22:1-30) and the wicked "shepherds" (23:1-8) which phrase of course also includes the kings as part of the leader class.

It is interesting that together with the judgment prophecies which will be understood by them "in the last days", there is a prophecy about the Davidic Messiah in the same context as the good shepherd in contrast to prophecies about the wicked shepherds (23:3-8).

We have the same elements here which we have found in Hosea, Isaiah and Micah: After the judgment of the exile, there is a return from it and salvation through the coming Messiah. This shows that the "last days" of Jer 23 include the judgment of 23:20, but also the following salvation in the days of the Davidic Messiah.

The same is true for the next section in Jer 30:21-24, where Jer 30:24 is almost exactly the same as 20:30. If you look at 30:21-23, you see that the Messiah is again mentioned nearby. The wider context is Jer 30-33 which is one of the great salvation sections in Jeremiah. Here we find the return from the exile (30:10; 32:37), the new covenant promised (31:31-34) including the forgiveness of the sins and salvation in the days of the coming Messiah (Jer 33:14-17).

In Jeremiah the idea of salvation after judgment is not only true for Israel, but also for some of the foreign nations he prophesies about, for example Moab in Jer 48:47:

13. For "in the latter days" the Hebrew has literally "in the end of the days" בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים ; the LXX translates "in the last of days" ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν.

14. According to Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests - A History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988), p. 458.

Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab
in the latter days¹⁵, declares the Lord.
Thus far is the judgment on Moab.

He speaks similarly about Elam in Jer 49:39.

Ezekiel's ministry as a prophet lasts from the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin (593 B.C., Ez 1:1-3)¹⁶ to at least "the 27th year" (571 B.C.; 29:17-21 that is for 22 years. He touches on the subject of the "last days" in his prophecy about "Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal" (Ez 38:1) as we can see in Ez 38:8 and 38:16.

God will vindicate his holiness through Gog by destroying the attacker and his army (39:1-7). This is at the same time salvation for the Israelites who have been brought home from the exile and have received God's Holy Spirit (39:25-29; 36:21-28; 37:14). They have been united under the Davidic Messiah (37:24; 34:23). We see again that similar elements are found in the context of the prophecies about the last days in the Old Testament.

Now we come to Daniel who is also set in the exile. We read in Dan 10:13-14:

13 The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, 14 and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days.¹⁷ For the vision is for days yet to come."

The context of this section is Dan 10-12. We learn from 10:1 that this revelation was received in the "third year of Cyrus king of Persia" which could be understood in connection with 1:21 as 536 B.C., two years after the famous decree of 538 B.C. allowing the Jews to go home to their country. Daniel is told about the shift from the Medo-Persian kingdom to the Greek

15. For "in the latter days" the Hebrew has literally "in the end of the days" . בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים .

16. According to Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests - A History of Old Testament Israel*, p. 482.

17. For "in the latter days" the Hebrew has literally "in the end of the days" בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים ; the LXX translates "at the end of days" ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν.

kingdom as a dominating force in world politics and influence on the future of the people of God (11:2ff). There will be a time of great trouble for Israel (12:1) culminating in the resurrection of the dead (12:2-3). As Dan 10-12 is the closure of the book and has many links with Dan 7 to 9 it is interesting to note that the word "end" is used quite frequently in an eschatological sense in the chapters 7-12 (8:17.19; 9:26; 11:27.35.40; 12:4.6.9.13).

In our survey about the "last days" in the Old Testament we have seen that the idea is already present in the Pentateuch (Jacob, Balaam and Moses). It is further developed by the 8th century B.C. prophets Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. Closer to the exile and within it Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel talk about them. There are recurrent ideas connected to the last days: the king from Judah (Gn 49:10) or Israel (Nm 24:17), later the specific Davidic Messiah (Hos, Is, Mi, Jer, Ez), the exile and the return from it (Dt, Hos, Is, Mi, Jer, Ez, Dn) and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a change of heart (Dt, Is, Ez) and last but not least the crushing of the enemies of God's people (Dt, Nm, Is, Mi, Jer, Ez, Dn).

17.1.2 The last days in the New Testament

The last days are also an important subject in the New Testament.

Christ

Jesus is the start of the end times. In the parable of the tenants in Mark 12:1ff the final¹⁸ sending of the son (Mark 12:6) marks the climax of the story of the parable. As this parable is a reflection of Israel's salvation history it is clear that for Jesus the sending of the Son of God is the beginning of the end times. We find the same idea in Heb 1:1-2:

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days¹⁹ he has

18. ἔσχαιον

19. For "in these last days" the Greek has ἐν ἔσχαιον τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων. If not noted otherwise, the Greek New Testament quotations are from the Holmes, The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition.

spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

In the New Testament the beginning of the last days is the first coming of Jesus Christ. The end of the last days is his second coming.

In his great chapter about the resurrection Paul speaks of Christ as the last Adam (1 Cor 15:42-49:

42 So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.²⁰ 46 But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

For Paul the first Adam had an impact on all the children of Adam and Eve afterwards. All of mankind comes from him. So Jesus Christ as the last Adam who was crucified and has risen from the dead is both the end of the old mankind and the beginning of the new. In the life of Christ the end of everything old is the cross (Gal 6:14; 2:19-20; 2 Cor 5:14; Eph 4:22) and the beginning of everything new is his resurrection (Rom 6:4; Eph 2:5-6; 2 Cor 5:17; 1 Cor 15:22). He is the life-giving spirit.

In Revelation Christ is revealed to John as "the first and the last"²¹ (Rv

20. For "the last Adam (became) a life-giving spirit" the Greek has ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδάμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν..

21. For "the first and the last" the Greek has ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος.

1:17; 2:8; 22:13). With Is 44:6²² and 48:12²³ in mind this is a powerful self-revelation of Jesus Christ as God (22:13):

12 “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

In the last days

This is an idiom that is also found in the New Testament several times. We have already seen its use in Heb 1:1-2. In his sermon on Pentecost Peter points to Joel's prophecy in the following way (Acts 2:16-17):

16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:
17 And in the last days²⁴ it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

In the Old Testament teaching about the last days we have seen that the outpouring of God's Spirit was one element of God's work related to the last days. Here we have the New Testament pointer to the fulfillment. As the first coming of Christ is the beginning of the last days and his second coming the end of the last days, we can say that during his absence according to the body the presence of the Holy Spirit is another characteristic of the last days (John 16:7; 14:16-20; Mt 28:20; 18:20).

In 2 Tm 3:1-2 Paul starts to give a description of people living in the last days:

22. Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.

23. Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am he; I am the first, and I am the last.

24. For “in the last days” the Greek has ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις. This is an explanation of the original “afterward” in Joel 2:28.

1 But understand this, that in the last days²⁵ there will come times of difficulty. 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy...

In agreement with Paul and his note about "lovers of money" James warns rich people in his letter (5:3) "You have laid up treasure in the last days."²⁶

Peter joins the warnings about evils in the last days in his second letter (3:1-4)

... that scoffers will come in the last days²⁷ with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation ..."

One characteristic of the last days is that people will look at the prophecies of the Old ("the predictions of the holy prophets") and New Testaments ("the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles") about the last days with disrespect. They will mock the idea of the coming of the day of the Lord to abolish the old world and to bring in the new heavens and the new earth (3:10-13).

On the last day

This is especially used in John in the singular. First we see this in John 6:39.40.44.54 where Jesus speaks of his raising believers up "on the last day"²⁸. In John 11:23-24 we hear Jesus and Martha talking:

23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."²⁹

25. For "in the last days" the Greek has ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις.

26. For "in the last days" the Greek has ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις.

27. For "in the last days" the Greek has ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν.

28. For "on the last day" the Greek has τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ.

29. For "on the last day" the Greek has ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ.

We know that Lazarus was raised from the dead on that very day. But it is interesting that Martha believed the teaching we have just seen in John 6 that the resurrection would be "on the last day".

In John 12:47-48 Jesus says:

47 If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.³⁰

According to these six uses of 'the last day' in John two things happen on the last day: The resurrection of the believers for life and the judgment of the unfaithful who have rejected the word of Jesus (compare John 5:28-29).

Other combinations of time words with "last"

are found in the New Testament in 1 Pt 1:3-5; 1:20; Jude 1:17-18; 1 John 2:18-23.

Some other special last things

According to 1 Cor 15:26 the "last enemy"³¹ of Jesus Christ to be destroyed is death. This will happen according to 1 Cor 15:54-57 on the day of resurrection. The time when this will happen is given in 1 Cor 15:52 as "at the last trumpet"³².

In Revelation 15:1 we hear of the last plagues:

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last,³³ for with them the wrath of God is finished.

30. For "on the last day" the Greek has ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ.

31. For the "last enemy" the Greek has ἔσχατος ἐχθρὸς.

32. For "at the last trumpet" the Greek has ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ σάλπιγγι.

33. For the "seven plagues, which are the last" the Greek has πληγὰς ἑπτὰ τὰς ἐσχάτας.

In Rev 21:9 the last plagues are mentioned again. The importance of the seven angels administering the bowls full of the seven last plagues is underlined by the fact that three of the last four bigger sections are introduced and accompanied by them: First we see them in action in 15:1-16:21, then one of them guides John in 17:1-19:10 and thirdly another one guides him in 21:9-22:10.

17.2 The day of the Lord

17.2.1 The day of the Lord in the Old Testament

Obadiah

According to Winfried Meissner we can see Obadiah as the first of the writing prophets³⁴ who prophesied about the middle of the 9th century B.C.³⁵ In Ob 1:8-9.15-21 the prophet talks about "the day of the Lord". We hear in Ob 1:15:

For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations.
As you have done, it shall be done to you;
your deeds shall return on your own head.

Even if all nations are mentioned, the main target for Obadiah is Edom (Ob 1:8-9; see also 1:1.18.19.21).

If this assumption is correct that Obadiah is the first writing prophet, then he is also the one who began the teaching of the "day of the Lord". He may have had Moses' words of Dt 32:35-36 in mind:³⁶

35 Vengeance is mine, and recompense,

34. Winfried Meissner, *Bücher Joel und Obadja*, vol. 36, Edition C Bibelkommentar Altes Testament (Holzgerlingen: Hänssler, 2000), p. 252.

35. Later prophets seem to have borrowed from Obadiah. Compare Ob 1:8-9.15-21 with Jer 49:7-22; Ob 1:17 with Joel 2:32; Ob 1:10 with Joel 3:19; Ob 1:11 with Joel 3:3; Ob 1:15a with Joel 3:14; Ob 1:15b with Joel 3:4.7; Ob 1:17 with Joel 3:16f; Ob 1:18 with Joel 3:8; Ob 1:1-9 with Jer 38:22; 49:7ff; Ob 1:16 with Jer 49:12; 25:27ff; Ob 1:17 with Is 14:2. In Ob 1:4.17-19 he seems to point back to Nm 24:21.18f.

36. Meissner, *Bücher Joel und Obadja*, p. 69.

for the time when their foot shall slip;
 for the day of their calamity is at hand,³⁷
 and their doom comes swiftly.'
 36 For the Lord will vindicate his people
 and have compassion on his servants,
 when he sees that their power is gone
 and there is none remaining, bond or free.

The words "for the day of their calamity is at hand",³⁸ are reflected in Ob 1:13 "in the day of their calamity"³⁹ and in Ob 1:15 "for the day of the Lord is near".⁴⁰ We have already seen before that there is a teaching of the end times in Deuteronomy (31:29) with regard to the song of Moses (Dt 32:1-43). We could see the "day of the Lord" as an action day of God where he endorses his covenant including curses and blessings (Dt 28). Blessings for those who are faithful or repent from their sins, curses for the enemies of the people of God or those Israelites who have broken the covenant.⁴¹ The outcome of the day of the Lord in Obadiah is: "... the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (Ob 1:21).

Joel

With Meissner⁴² we see Joel as following Obadiah⁴³ and preceding Amos.⁴⁴ The tools of God's judgment for Israel in Joel are an enormous army of locusts devouring everything (1:4-7) and a fire that consumes pastures, fields and the water supplies (1:19-20; 2:3). A vast army of all nations is also mentioned, but they are the ones who are judged (3:1-3.9-14). An extra interesting piece of information is that this army comes from the north (2:20).

37. כִּי קִרְבָּה יוֹם אֲיִדָּם

38. כִּי קִרְבָּה יוֹם אֲיִדָּם

39. בַּיּוֹם אֲיִדָּם

40. בִּיִּקְרֹב יוֹם־יְהוָה

41. Meissner, Bücher Joel und Obadja, p. 64-67.

42. *ibid.*, p. 252.

43. Ob 1:17 seems to be quoted as the word of the Lord in Joel 2:32.

44. Amos seems to start his book in 1:2 with a quote from Joel 4:16 and to end it in 9:13 with a quote from Joel 4:18.

One key idea of Joel is a call to repentance, to prayer and fasting (1:13-14; 2:1.12-17) because the day of the Lord is near (1:15; 2:1-2; 2:11; 3:14). They should use the trumpet to warn the people (2:1.15). The result of repentance is salvation for Israel's remnant (2:18-27.32; 3:1.16-18.20-21). An outpouring of God's Spirit is promised in relation with the coming of the day of the Lord (2:28-32). God is present in Israel (2:27-29; 3:17.21). The day of the Lord has cosmological dimensions with regard to earth, heavens, sun, moon and stars (2:10-12; 2,30-31; 3:15-16). Salvation also touches the earth and the environment (2:19.21-22).

Amos

The prophecy of Amos was received at the time "concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake".⁴⁵ Amos seems to be fighting a misconception of the day of the Lord which was widespread (5:18-20):

18 Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!
 Why would you have the day of the Lord?
 It is darkness, and not light,
 19 as if a man fled from a lion,
 and a bear met him,
 or went into the house
 and leaned his hand against the wall,
 and a serpent bit him.
 20 Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light,
 and gloom with no brightness in it?

Obadiah had prophesied that the judgment of Edom and all nations would mean salvation for Judah (Ob 1:15-21). Joel had also prophesied that God would save Israel from the attacking nations (Joel 3:2.16).

In the context of Joel the roaring of the Lord means judgment of the nations and protection of Israel. Israel had misunderstood and misused the prophecies of Obadiah and of Joel as if repentance were not necessary and

45. See Zec 14:5.

God would save them anyhow on his day because they were Israelites. They had eradicated the call of Joel to repent. Therefore Amos quotes this roaring of the Lord but directs it against Israel at the beginning of his book (Amos 1:2):

And he said:

“The Lord roars from Zion
and utters his voice from Jerusalem;
the pastures of the shepherds mourn,
and the top of Carmel withers.”

The main intention of the book of Amos is to destroy the false security of Israel that they are the people of God but without repenting from their sins (Amos 3:1-2):

1 Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you,
O people of Israel, against the whole family
that I brought up out of the land of Egypt:
2 “You only have I known
of all the families of the earth;
therefore I will punish you
for all your iniquities.”

Israel's election and their liberation out of Egypt is here turned against them. They are not secure just because they are God's one and only nation in this world. On the contrary, they will be punished for every single commandment of the covenant they have broken! The day of the Lord in Amos 5:18-20 will be a dark judgment day for Israel leading them into exile (Amos 5:27). This happened when the Assyrians destroyed Samaria in 722 B.C. and deported the northern tribes into the Assyrian exile (2 Kgs 17).

We see in Amos what we will see again in the following writing prophets that the prophets give the "day of the Lord" a double perspective. One perspective is the historical perspective: Some things happen within history, perhaps in their generation or in following generations which will be a fulfillment of certain elements of their prophecy of the day of the Lord. In the case of Amos this is the Assyrian exile of the northern tribes.

But there is also the eschatological aspect of the day of the Lord. At some point in history there will be a total change of the living conditions of Israel, the nations and the whole world. The kingdom will be the Lord's and God will take over. Within Amos this is connected to the rebuilding of the "booth of David" in 9:11-15.

Both perspectives, the historical and the eschatological, are united in the person of the God of the covenant. He has made his covenants with Abraham, Israel and David. He is the ultimate judge and Savior of the world bringing about the kingdom of God and the coming of His Messiah who will establish a kingdom of peace lasting for ever. Every single historical day of the Lord is a precursor of the final and ultimate day of the Lord. The principles are the same in all days of the Lord, justice and righteousness without favoritism.

Isaiah

The first date given in the book of Isaiah is found in 6:1 which is 740 B.C. The last historical note within the book relates the death of Sennacherib king of Assyria in Is 37:37-38 which happened in 681 B.C.⁴⁶ The first time Isaiah speaks of the day of the Lord (2:6-22) he presents the day very much in the way of Amos as a judgment day upon Israel (2:11-12):

11 The haughty looks of man shall be brought low,
and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled,
and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

12 For the Lord of hosts has a day
against all that is proud and lofty,
against all that is lifted up -
and it shall be brought low.

On that day the Lord alone will be exalted. This seems to be the connection to 2:1-5 where the house of the Lord will be the highest place on earth, the center of God's revelation to change the nations. The result is 2:1-5, the way to get there is 2:6-22. The terror caused on earth is described in Is 2:19-21.

46. According to K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 2003), p. 23.

In Is 13:1-14:27 we have an oracle of Isaiah concerning Babylon. The day of the Lord is the subject of 13:2-22. Is 13:6.9 reflects Joel 1:15 by presenting the day of the Lord as "near" and as "a destruction" from the Almighty. As in Joel there are cosmological dimensions to this day (Is 13:10.13). In the same context the destruction of Babylon's kingdom through the Medes is predicted (Is 13:17-22). Again we have the historical⁴⁷ and the eschatological dimension⁴⁸ in one text. In Is 2 Israel was the target of the day of the Lord, here it is Babylon. In Is 22:5 another special day of the Lord is mentioned which in this context again targets Jerusalem. Is 24:1-23 presents the end of this earth. We read in Is 24:19-23 what change this will bring:

19 The earth is utterly broken,
 the earth is split apart,
 the earth is violently shaken.
 20 The earth staggers like a drunken man;
 it sways like a hut;
 its transgression lies heavy upon it,
 and it falls, and will not rise again.
 21 On that day the Lord will punish
 the host of heaven, in heaven,
 and the kings of the earth, on the earth.
 22 They will be gathered together
 as prisoners in a pit;
 they will be shut up in a prison,
 and after many days they will be punished.
 23 Then the moon will be confounded
 and the sun ashamed,
 for the Lord of hosts reigns
 on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,
 and his glory will be before his elders.

47. The Persians and Medes took over from the Babylonians in 539 B.C. See Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests - A History of Old Testament Israel*, p. 448.

48. In the context of the book of Isaiah 13:13 really means the end of this world as in Is 24; 34; 65 and 66.

"On that day" (24:21) will be in the context of Isaiah the day of the Lord, compare with 25:9; 26:1; 27:1.2; 27:12-13 (all from Is 24-27). On that day Israel sees his God and rejoices in His salvation (25:9). On that day they will sing joyfully about Jerusalem as the city of salvation (26:1). On that day God will kill "Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea" (27:1). On that day Israel will be changed from a useless vineyard (see Is 5:1-7) into a vineyard filling the whole world with good fruit (27:2-6). On that day God will gather his people from Egypt and Assyria by blowing the trumpet and collecting all of them (27:12.13).

Is 34 is another section where all nations and especially Edom are the target of the day of the Lord (Is 34:8)⁴⁹ as it was the case in Ob 1:15.18.19. As we had seen in Is 24 the end of the earth, we are told here about the passing away of the heavens (34:4):

All the host of heaven shall rot away,
and the skies roll up like a scroll.
All their host shall fall,
as leaves fall from the vine,
like leaves falling from the fig tree.

Is 34-35 are twin chapters. Is 34 shows us the judgment of Edom and all nations on the day of the Lord, while Is 35 depicts God coming to redeem his people and lead them home to a new Zion with eternal joy. The "day of vengeance" for the Lord in Is 34:8 is taken up by the Messiah in Is 61:1-2 as part of his proclamation. This is very similar to Is 34-35: Judgment of the enemies of God and comfort for his people.

The same theme is continued in Is 62:10-63:6, only that here we have comfort first (62:10-12) and then vengeance (63:1-6), especially 63:4. Again the day of the Lord is directed against all nations (63:6) and especially Edom (63:1). The Lord is trampling the nations to death as somebody treads a wine press making his garments red (63:1-3.6). We learn from 66:7-8 that Jerusalem and the whole country are born again on one day:

49. For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. The first half of the sentence is in Hebrew: כִּי יוֹם נִקְמָם לַיהוָה

7 Before she was in labor she gave birth;
 before her pain came upon her she delivered a son.
 8 Who has heard such a thing?
 Who has seen such things?
 Shall a land be born in one day?⁵⁰
 Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment?
 For as soon as Zion was in labor
 she brought forth her children.

This seems to be about the new birth of Israel through a renewed Jerusalem. This day is not called day of the Lord here. But within the context of Isaiah it will be the same day. The context is the new heavens and the new earth in Is 65-66. Isaiah has taught of the passing away of the earth (Is 24) and the heavens (Is 34) before. Now he teaches the new heavens and the new earth (Is 65:17; 66:22) and a newly created Jerusalem (65:18-19).

Another context within Isaiah where this is taught is Is 51:3-8.16 with a special emphasis on the word of God taking part in the new creation (Is 51:7.16) when heaven and earth pass away (51:6). The prayer in Is 64:1-3 is noteworthy as here they ask for God's coming with a great impact on the heavens and the earth. In a way this prayer is answered in Is 65-66 with a total change of the world order and by the coming of God in Is 66:15-16 with fire. The salvation of Jerusalem (66:7-14) goes again hand in hand with the judgment of the world (66:15-16).

Zephaniah

Zephaniah prophesied in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah (1:1). The day of the Lord is an important subject in the three chapters he wrote: 1:7.8.9.10; 1:14.15.16.18; 2:2.3; 3:8.11.16. The day of the Lord brings judgment of Israel (1:4-6) affecting all mankind and beasts (1:2-3); the Philistines (2:4-7); Moab and the Ammonites (2:8-11); the Cushites (2:12) and the Assyrians (2:13-15).

The historical dimension of this day of the Lord relates to the coming of the Babylonians who conquered Jerusalem and Judah in 605 and 597

50. הַיּוֹחַל אֶרֶץ בְּיוֹם אֶחָד.

B.C. and destroyed Jerusalem in 586.⁵¹ The other nations named were also affected by the victories of the Babylonians.

Zephaniah also sees salvation for Israel's remnant (2:9; 3:12-13.19-20) and even for a remnant of the nations (2:11; 3:9). In Zep 1:18 we read: "In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed". In 3:8 God says "in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed". The outcome of the day of the Lord is God's joyful presence in Israel and Jerusalem (3:14.15.17). Compare 3:13 with Rv 14:4.

Jeremiah

In Lamentations 2:21-22 Jeremiah sees the fall of Jerusalem as something that happened "on the day of the anger of the Lord". There are some elements in Jer 25:15-38 which remind us of the day of the Lord in other prophets. For example the roaring of the lion (Jer 25:30.38) as in Joel and Amos.

The phrase "on that day" in 25:31-33 could be understood on the backdrop of the day of the Lord (compare Jer 25:33 with Is 66:16). Certain phrases in Jer 30:1-3.4-11.17-22.23-24 remind us of other passages which talk of the day of the Lord, especially Jer 30:7-8. It is interesting that Jer 31:1 continues in the same time frame (see 31:1-14.15-25.26.27-30.31-40) including the prediction of the new covenant.

Ezekiel

The fall of Jerusalem is prophesied in Ez 7:19 as happening "in the day of the wrath of the Lord" or in 13:5 "in the day of the Lord". Ez 34:12 speaks of the going into the exile as happening "on a day of clouds and thick darkness".⁵² Ez 30:2ff sees the conquest of Egypt as happening on the "day of the Lord".⁵³ There are certain elements in Ez 38-39 which remind us of prophecies about the day of the Lord in other books: 38:8.15.16.17.18-23; 39:6-7.8.10 (see Jer 30:16; Ob); 39:17 (see Rev 19:17-18); 39:21-23 (from

51. Meissner, Bücher Joel und Obadja, p. 70.

52. בְּיוֹם עָנָן וְעָרְפָּל

53. See Meissner, Bücher Joel und Obadja, p. 70.

that day forward!).25-29 (pouring out of the Spirit, see Joel; having come back from all nations; knowing the Lord). There are also some parallels in Ez 47:1ff and Joel 3:18; Ez 36:26f; 39:29 and Joel 2:28f; Ez 38:6.15; 39:2.11; 38:17; 39:2.8 and Joel 2:20 (the enemy is from the north).

Zechariah

Zechariah closes his book with the day of the Lord 14:1.3.4.6.7.8.9.13.20.21 He comes for battle to save his people from the enemies. We read in Zec 14:1-4:

1 Behold, a day is coming for the Lord, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. 2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3 Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. 4 On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.

This day can be combined with the event in Zec 12:9-10 which may report God's saving Israel at the same time. They recognize him whom they have pierced and mourn for him and receive forgiveness of their sins and the Holy Spirit (13:1).

Malachi

According to Malachi the day of the Lord is like "a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap" (3:2). It is "burning like an oven" for the evildoers who will be like stubble burnt to ashes (4:1.3). But for those who fear the Lord "the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings" on that day (4:2). Because this day is dangerous for those unprepared, God sends Elijah the

prophet to prepare God's people for this day (3:1; 4:5). Mal 4:5 points back to Joel 2:31.

17.2.2 The day of the Lord in the New Testament

The "day of the Lord" is also an important subject in the New Testament. According to our understanding the following terms are used for the "day of the Lord" in a synonymous way in the given verses:

the day of the Lord⁵⁴ (Acts 2:20; 1 Cor 5:5; 1 Thes 5:2; 2 Thes 2:2; 2 Pt 3:10)

the day of our Lord Jesus Christ⁵⁵ (1 Cor 1:8)

the day of our Lord Jesus⁵⁶ (2 Cor 1:14)

the day of Christ Jesus⁵⁷ (Phil 1:6)

the day of Christ⁵⁸ (Phil 1:10; 2:16)

the day of the son of man⁵⁹ (Lk 17:24)

the day the son of man will be revealed⁶⁰ Lk 17:30)

the day of God⁶¹ (2 Pt 3:12; Rv 16:14)

the day of wrath⁶² (Rom 2:5; Rv 6:17)

the day of judgment⁶³ (Mt 10:15; 11:22.24; 12:36; 2 Pt 2:9; 3:7; 1 John 4:17)

the day when God judges⁶⁴ (Rom 2:16)

the judgment of the great day⁶⁵ (Jude 1:6)

54. ημέρα κυρίου or η ημέρα του κυρίου.

55. εν τη ημέρα του κυρίου ημών Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ

56. εν τη ημέρα του κυρίου ημών Ιησοῦ

57. ἄχρι ημέρας Χριστοῦ Ιησοῦ

58. εις ημέραν Χριστοῦ

59. οὕτως ἔσται ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τη ημέρα αὐτοῦ

60. ἔσται ἡ ημέρα ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀποκαλύπτεται

61. τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας or εἰς τὸν πόλεμον τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς μεγάλης τοῦ θεοῦ

62. ἐν ημέρᾳ ὀργῆς καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ θεοῦ or η ημέρα η μεγάλη τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτῶν

63. ἐν ημέρᾳ κρίσεως or εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων or ἐν τη ημέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως

64. ἐν ημέρᾳ ὅτε κρίνει ὁ θεὸς

65. εἰς κρίσιν μεγάλης ἡμέρας

the last day⁶⁶ (John 6:39.40.44.54; 11:24; 12:48)
 the day of eternity⁶⁷ (2 Pt 3:18)
 on that day⁶⁸ (Mt 7:22; 24:36; 26:29; Mk 13:32; 14:25; Lk
 10:12; 17:31; 21:34; 2 Thes 1:10; 2 Tm 1:12; 1:18; 4:8.
 the day⁶⁹ (1 Cor 3:13; 1 Thes 5:4)

What can we learn according to these sections about the day of the Lord?

What happens before the day of the Lord?

The outpouring of God's Spirit happens before (Acts 2:16-21).

Signs and wonders in heaven and on earth happen before it. The sun turns to darkness and the moon to blood (Acts 2:16-21).

A strong denial of the coming of the day of the Lord by scoffers will happen (2 Pt 3:3-4).

The man of lawlessness "is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and 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" (2 Thes 2:3-4). "What is restraining" the man of lawlessness and "who is restraining" him has to be out of the way before he can be revealed (2 Thes 2:6-7).

Armageddon will be the place where three unclean spirits will cause a worldwide army to be gathered (Rv 16:13-14)).

66. τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ or ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ

67. εἰς ἡμέραν αἰῶνος

68. ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκεῖνη or ἐν ἐκεῖνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ or ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκεῖνῃ or Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκεῖνης or ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκεῖνης or εἰς ἐκεῖνην τὴν ἡμέραν

69. ἡ ἡμέρα

What will the day of the Lord be like?

Nobody knows the day. The Lord comes on his day like a thief in the night (1 Thes 5:2.4; 2 Pt 3:10; Mt 24:36.42-43; Mk 13:32; Lk 12:39-40; 21:34; Rv 3:3; 16:15).

Visible everywhere like lightning and not secret will the son of man be on his day (Lk 17:24.30; Mt 24:27).

Great and awe-inspiring is this day (Acts 2:20; Jude 1:6; Rv 6:17; 16:14).

Fiery will this day be consuming all nonspiritual works in fire and dissolving the heavens and the earth (1 Cor 3:13-15; 2 Pt 3:10.12; compare 2 Thes 1:7).

A "day of eternity" ending this world and bringing eternity (2 Pt 3:18).

What happens on the day of the Lord?

The judgment will happen on that day so that some get saved and rewarded and others are condemned and punished (Mt 7:22; 10:15; 11:22.24; 12:36; Lk 10:12; 17:24-37; John 12:48; Acts 2:21; Rom 2:5-10.16; 1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:10; 2:16; 1 Thes 5:3; 2 Thes 2:8; 2 Tm 1:18; 4:8; 2 Pt 2:9; 3:7; 1 John 4:17; Jude 1:6).

The completion of God's work in the believers is promised for that day (Phil 1:6; 2 Tm 1:12).

The resurrection will happen (John 6:39.40.44.54; 11:24; 5:28; 1 Thes 4:13-5:11).

The transformation of the living believers will happen (1 Thes 4:13-5:11; compare 1 Cor 15:50-52).

The rapture of the believers towards Jesus Christ coming in the clouds will happen (1 Thes 4:17).

The eternal kingdom of God starts on that day (Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25).

War will break out - between the armies of the kings of the whole world on the one hand and the almighty God on the other and God will have the victory (Rv 16:14).

A glorious divine appearing will be the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thes 1:10).

17.3 The coming kingdom of God

17.3.1 In the Old Testament

The idea that God is king is found quite often in the Old Testament,⁷⁰ but in some texts there is also the idea of a future coming kingdom of God which will change the whole world. Some of those texts we have already seen together with predictions of the coming Messiah. There will be a kingdom of peace lasting forever with Jerusalem as the center of the world according to Is 2:1-5; Micah 4:1-5 and Jer 3:15-18. In Isaiah there are more statements about the coming kingdom of God (Is 9:6-7; 11:1-10; 24:23; 25:6-9; 26:19; 52:7; 60-62; 65-66). Let us hear Is 9:6-7:

6 For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,

70. See for example Ex 15:18; 1 Sm 8:7; 12:12; Ps 96:10; 97:1; 99:1.

on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
 to establish it and to uphold it
 with justice and with righteousness
 from this time forth and forevermore.
 The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

The idea is that this king will start to reign and never stop to rule. This is an eternal kingdom. If we combine Is 9:6 and 10:21 the same name "Mighty God"⁷¹ is used as the name of the son of David in 9:6 and of God in 10:21. The result is a hint at the divinity of the Messiah who will live and remain for ever.

In the second year (604 B.C.)⁷² of his reign king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a dream of an image and of a stone destroying the image. In his interpretation of the king's dream Daniel explains that the image represents four world kingdoms and that the stone which destroys the image is the kingdom of God (Dan 2:44-45):

44 And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will
 set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the
 kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all
 these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand
 forever, 45 just as you saw that a stone was cut from a moun-
 tain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron,
 the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has
 made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is
 certain, and its interpretation sure.

According to the prophetic explanation God would establish his kingdom during the time of the four kingdoms of the world. There would be a time of overlapping with both the image and the stone on the scene but finally the stone would destroy all four kingdoms and become the only power left in the world.

The first kingdom was Babylon with Nebuchadnezzar as the golden head (2:38). When we look back from the New Testament fulfillment to

71. אֵל גִּבּוֹר

72. Merrill, Kingdom of Priests - A History of Old Testament Israel, p. 448.

Dan 2, we can count 1. Babylon, 2. Medo-Persia, 3. Greece and 4. the Roman Empire. It is impressive that Jesus Christ was born during the Roman Empire fulfilling this prophecy.

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel himself saw a dream which he wrote down in Dan 7 (Dn 7:1). Daniel saw four animals representing four kingdoms of this world. The first like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard and the fourth totally different, terrifying and causing a lot of trouble for the saints. But because of the power and the judgment of God, "the ancient of days", these four world kingdoms were finished and all power was handed over to someone who was like a son of man (Dn 7:13-14):

13 I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
14 And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.

At the end of the following interpretation of the vision the empowering of the one who is like a son of man and who stands in contrast to the four wild animals is explained with the following words (Dn 7:27):

And the kingdom and the dominion
and the greatness of the kingdoms
under the whole heaven
shall be given to the people of the saints
of the Most High;
their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom,

and all dominions shall serve and obey them.'

If we combine the teaching of Dn 2 and Dn 7 and Is 9 we can say that according to these prophecies a kingdom of God was to be expected which would last for ever. As Nebuchadnezzar in his own person represents the whole Babylonian kingdom (Dn 2:38) the son of David represents and establishes the whole kingdom of God (Is 9:6-7; Dn 7:13-14.28). When the Messiah receives the kingdom, the people of the saints of the Most High receive the kingdom. Or to put it in other words: The coming of the Messiah is the coming of the kingdom of God. We have already seen that the day of the Lord in Zechariah 14 results in God's universal kingdom (Zec 14:9):

And the Lord will be king over all the earth.

On that day the Lord will be one and his name one.

17.3.2 In the New Testament

The "kingdom of God"⁷³ is a very important concept in the New Testament. The "kingdom of heaven" is used synonymously in Matthew probably because of the Jewish tendency to avoid using the name of God. Therefore "of heaven" is said instead of "of God".⁷⁴ Because Jesus Christ is the king of this kingdom of God or of heaven the "kingdom of Christ"⁷⁵ is used synonymously as well. The kingdom is also called the kingdom of the father of the righteous (Mt 13:43). In the following we will try to sum up what these sections teach us about the kingdom of God or of Christ.

73. Kingdom of God Mt 12:28 ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ; 19:24; 21:31; 21:43; Mk 1:15; 4:11; 4:26; 4:30; 9:1; 9:47; 10:14; 10:15; 10:23; 10:24; 10:25; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43; Lk 4:43; 6:20; 7:28; 8:1; 8:10; 9:2; 9:11; 9:27; 9:60; 9:62; 10:9; 10:11; 11:20; 13:18; 13:20; 13:28; 13:29; 14:15; 16:16; 17:20; 17:21; 18:16; 18:17; 18:24; 18:25; 18:29; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16; 22:18; 23:51; John 3:3; 3:5; Acts 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:23; 28:31; Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20; 6:9; 6:10; 15:24; 15:50; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5; Col 4:11; 1 Thes 2:12; 2 Thes 1:5; 2 Tm 4:1; Heb 1:8; Jas 2:5; Rv 12:10.

74. The phrase "kingdom of heaven" is used in Matthew 3:2 ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν; 4:17; 5:3; 5:10; 5:19; 5:20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11; 11:12; 13:11; 13:24; 13:31; 13:33; 13:44; 13:45; 13:47; 13:52; 16:19; 18:1; 18:3; 18:4; 18:23; 19:12; 19:14; 19:23; 20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1.

75. Kingdom of Christ Eph 5:5 ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ; 2 Tm 4:1; Heb 1:8; 2 Pt 1:11; Rv 11:15; 12:10; 1 Cor 15:24.)

The kingdom of God is near.

The liberation of demon possessed people is a sign of the kingdom of God having arrived (Mt 12:28; Lk 11:20). John the Baptist started to preach that people should repent because the kingdom of God was near (Mt 3:2).⁷⁶ After John was put into prison, Jesus preached the same message (Mt 4:17, Mk 1:15). Later Jesus sent the twelve (Mt 10:7) and the 72 disciples (Lk 10:9,11 with the same message that the kingdom of God is near. In all these texts this is the reason for immediate repentance. In his discourse about the destruction of Jerusalem and the further developments until his own coming back with the clouds Jesus says (Lk 21:31):

So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.⁷⁷

This is another aspect of the kingdom of God being near than used in the call to repentance above. In the call of repentance the kingdom of God was offered to Israel in the person of Jesus Christ the Messiah. But when Jesus was rejected and crucified, the kingdom of God was taken away from them to be given to another people who would produce the fruit God requested (Mt 21:43; Lk 19:41-44). This other nation would be people from Israel (like Peter, James and John) and from all Gentile nations (like Luke and Theophilus) who would accept Jesus Christ as Savior and bring forth fruit worthy of repentance. But in Lk 21:31 the course of the end times comes to its closure. The times of the Gentiles will come to an end (Lk 21:24) and the son of David will come to his nation to claim his throne for ever (Lk 1:32-33; 13:34-35; Rom 11:25-29) to fulfill the old prophecy of Is 9:6-7 and Is 11:1-10.

To whom does the kingdom of God belong?

When Jesus saw the faith of the centurion, he proclaimed that many people like him will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham,

⁷⁶. ἡγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν

⁷⁷. ὅτι ἐγγύς ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ

Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Mt 8:11; Lk 13:28 is very similar, but adding north and south.). People who reach this kingdom will feast, eat bread and drink wine, enjoying the blessings of God's kingdom (Mk 14:25; Lk 14:15; 22:16.18).

To enter the kingdom of God it is not enough to call Jesus Lord, but it is necessary to live under his rule (Mt 7:21. According to Mt 18:3 only those who turn and become like children will enter. All have to receive the kingdom like a child (Mk 10:15; Lk 18:17).

For the rich it is notoriously difficult to enter the kingdom (Mt 19:23.24; Mk 10:23.24.25; Lk 18:24.25). This is also true for those who think themselves spiritually rich (compare Mt 5:3), therefore repentant tax collectors and prostitutes will go into the kingdom of God before them (Mt 21:31).

Jesus admonishes people very drastically to fight sin and temptation in their lives. It would be better to lose one eye and enter the kingdom handicapped than to go to hell with both eyes (Mk 9:47). One has to be born of water and the Spirit to enter God's kingdom (John 3:5). Paul states in Acts 14:22, "that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God". If believers follow Peter's admonition "there will be richly provided" for them "an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pt 1:11).

Who is great or small in the kingdom of God? In the sermon on the mount Jesus declares (Mt 5:19.20):

Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

When the disciples asked who will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus showed them a child and explained: "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 18:1.4). It may come as a surprise that the smallest in the kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist about whom Jesus says that among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist (Mt 11:11; Lk 7:28).

John the Baptist is a man of transition. He marks the end of the Law and the Prophets according to Lk 16:16-18:

16 The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces⁷⁸ his way into it. 17 But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void. 18 Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

In Lk 16:16-18 force seems to be used to get into the kingdom. John also marks the start of the preaching of the near kingdom of God (Mt 3:2). Jesus says about him (Mt 11:11-14):

11 Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence,⁷⁹ and the violent take it by force. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, 14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

The verse 11:12 translated like this could point to the fact that John has been put into prison (Mt 11:2) as a representative prophet of the kingdom of God and suffers violence. The violent who take it by force could be people who make it impossible for others to enter as in Mt 23:13. And the same powers that attacked John would sooner or later also attack Jesus.

78. Here the verb form in the Greek *καὶ πᾶς εἰς αὐτὴν βιάζεται* is understood as middle.

79. Here the verb form *βιάζεται* is understood as passive, see F. E. Gaebelein, *The Expositors Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, vol. 8, Carson, D. A. and Wessell, W. W. and Liefeld, W. L. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1984), p. 266. If it is understood as middle, it can be translated: "the kingdom of heaven has been coming violently". In this case Jesus means the successful spreading of the kingdom by the power of God.

To inherit the kingdom of God is used by Paul synonymously with the other phrase to have (or reap) eternal life. Compare Gal 5:19-21 with Gal 6:7-8. Those who will not inherit the kingdom will reap "corruption". Those who follow the Spirit and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit will inherit the kingdom and reap eternal life (cf. 1 Cor 6:9-10; Eph 5:5).

It is also important to note 1 Cor 15:50 in the context of 15:50-52:

50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,⁸⁰ nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

The whole of chapter 15 is dedicated to the subject of the resurrection of the dead. "Flesh and blood" are the human beings as they are in this earthly life. In 15:44-45 flesh and blood is called "a natural body"⁸¹ in contrast to the future "spiritual body"⁸². Adam represents this natural body having been created as "a living being".⁸³ The blood within an earthly⁸⁴ human being is identified as the seat of his "natural life" or his "soul" (see Lev 17:10-11).

In contrast to the first Adam stands Christ as the last Adam who in his resurrection became "a life-giving spirit"⁸⁵ and is the prototype of the heavenly⁸⁶ and new mankind (15:48). Everyone who wants to enter the kingdom of God must be changed into the likeness of Christ as the heavenly Adam.⁸⁷

Dead believers will stand up with an already new body. Believers who will be alive at the time of the last trumpet and the coming of Christ (see 1

80. σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομήσαι οὐ δύναται

81. σῶμα ψυχικόν

82. σῶμα πνευματικόν

83. Ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδάμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν•

84. χοϊκός

85. πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν

86. ὁ ἐπουράνιος

87. Compare Phil 3:20-21.

Thes 4:16; Mt 24:31; Is 27:13) will be changed within one second, within the twinkling of an eye. The verses 15:54-57 celebrate this as the victory over death, which is the last enemy Paul spoke about in 15:26.

To what kind of people does the kingdom of God belong? The kingdom is for people who are the "poor in spirit" (Mt 5:3) or the "poor" (Lk 6:20; Jas 2:5) or those who are persecuted because of righteousness (Mt 5:10 or who turn and become like children (Mt 18:3 or are children (Mt 19:14, Mk 10:14, Lk 18:16). Indeed everyone has to receive the kingdom of God like a child (Mk 10:15; Lk 18:17). God as the father of the "little flock" is going to give the kingdom to them (Lk 12:32). We learn from Lk 9:62 who is not fit for the kingdom:

“No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit⁸⁸ for the kingdom of God.”

When John reports his personal testimony of how he received the book of Revelation he says in Rv 1:9):

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Here is someone who has a share in the tribulation and the kingdom! Patient suffering and glory go hand in hand. That is the life of John and the teaching of Revelation and indeed the whole of New Testament (see Mt 5:10 above). Amongst the scribes who discussed the most important commandment with Jesus there was one who had so much insight that Jesus told him he was "not far from the kingdom of God" (Mk 12:34). Joseph of Arimathea was "a respected member of the Council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God" (Mk 15:43⁸⁹; compare Lk 23:51). The kingdom, of course, belongs to those whom God calls "into his own kingdom and glory" (1 Thes 2:12) or who are "considered worthy of the

88. εὐθετός

89. ὃς καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν προσδεχόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ

kingdom of God" (2 Thes 1:5). To see the kingdom of God one has to be born again (John 3:3). Jesus said that some of his disciples would live until they see the kingdom of God having come in power (Mk 9:1; Lk 9:27).

To become a kingdom of priests was the invitation to Israel by God in Ex 19:6. That was part of God's covenant promise on Mount Sinai. In the New Testament or "New Covenant" Peter declares that those Gentiles who believe in Christ are "a royal priesthood"⁹⁰ (1 Pt 2:9). They are now included together with the believing Israelites in this promise of the covenant (see also Rv 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 20:6; 22:5).

Parables of the kingdom of God

1. Parable of the sower (Mt 13:11,18)
2. Parable of the weeds (Mt 13:24)
3. Parable of the mustard seed (Mt 13:31, Mk 4:30, Lk 13:18)
4. Parable of the yeast (Mt 13:33, Lk 13:20)
5. Parable of the hidden treasure (Mt 13:44)
6. Parable of the pearl (Mt 13:45)
7. Parable of the net (Mt 13:47)
8. Parable of the house owner (Mt 13:52)
9. Parable of the growing seed (Mk 4:26)
10. Parable of the unmerciful servant (Mt 18:23)
11. Parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1)
12. Parable of the wedding banquet (Mt 22:2)
13. Parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1)
14. Parable of the great banquet (Lk 14:15-16)
15. Parable of the ten minas (Lk 19:11)

All these parables teach different aspects of the spreading of the kingdom of God, of its development through history and its final eschatological realization:

90. βασιλείον ιεράτευμα

How to receive and spread the kingdom by faith and give first priority to it (1, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15)

The astonishing spread and powerful growth of the kingdom (3, 4, 9)

About the activities of the devil to hinder the kingdom (1, 2)

About God's judgment separating the wicked from the righteous (2, 7, 10, 12, 13, 15)

About God's kindness and mercy in offering the kingdom (11, 12, 14, 15)

Working and sacrificing for God's kingdom

The mystery or mysteries of the kingdom of God have been given to the disciples of Jesus so that they can understand them and, of course, teach them (Mt 13:11; Lk 8:10; Mk 4:11). In his twofold work Luke uses several phrases for teaching or preaching the kingdom of God. "Preaching the good news of"⁹¹ the kingdom is used in Lk 4:43; 8:1; 16:16 and Acts 8:12. "Preaching"⁹² the kingdom is found in Lk 4:43-44; 8:1; 9:2; Acts 28:31. Jesus "spoke to them of the kingdom of God"⁹³ (Lk 9:11). When Jesus called someone to follow him who wanted to bury his father first he commanded him (Lk 9:60):

Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.⁹⁴

According to Acts 1:3 the risen Christ presented himself alive to the apostles "appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."⁹⁵ For Paul's preaching of the kingdom of God see Acts 19:8; 28:17-20.23; 28:30-31; for others cooperating with him Col 4:11; 2 Thes 1:5).

While scribes and Pharisees try to shut the entrance to the kingdom of God in people's faces without having the authority to do so (Mt 23:13), Jesus

91. εὐαγγελίζομαι

92. κηρύσσω

93. ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ

94. σὺ δὲ ἀπελθὼν διάγγελλε τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ.

95. λέγων τὰ περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ

gives the apostle Peter a great promise in Mt 16:19. It is not necessary to understand this authority as exclusively given to Peter because in Mt 18:18-20 the same authority seems to be given to two or three who become one in prayer in the name of Jesus.

Some people do not marry because of the kingdom of God (Mt 19:12). Others leave "house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God" and will "receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life" (Lk 18:29).

Qualities of the kingdom of God

When Paul wants to show the Christians in Rome how the "weak" and the "strong" in faith can live together in peace and not have clashes about eating, drinking and holy days he admonishes them by pointing to the qualities of God's kingdom (Rom 14:17):

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.⁹⁶

There were some people in Corinth who despised Paul (2 Cor 10:10) and had the ability to talk in a dazzling way, but Paul is confident that when he comes it will become evident who has the real authority from God (1 Cor 4:20):

For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.⁹⁷

The kingdom of God at the end of the end times

The "Our Father" contains this request (Mt 6:10; Lk 11:2):

Your kingdom come.⁹⁸

96. οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ βρώσις καὶ πόσις, ἀλλὰ δικαιοσύνη καὶ εἰρήνη καὶ χαρὰ ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ•

97. οὐ γὰρ ἐν λόγῳ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλ' ἐν δυνάμει.

98. ἔλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου

The Greek verb form is aorist imperative. This request may include the following aspects: Firstly that God's salvation bringing reign which has already started with the coming of Christ may be spread. This means that people obediently accept God's rule in their lives and taste the blessings of eschatological salvation. Secondly, that the consummate and final ushering in of the kingdom of God may happen soon.⁹⁹ Because this eschatological coming of the kingdom of God is related to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, we will see more of this when we talk about the second coming of Jesus Christ.

When will the kingdom come? That is the question of some Pharisees in Lk 17:20. Jesus answers the Pharisees in a negative sense (17:21-22):

20 ...The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.¹⁰⁰

The Pharisees did not recognize the kingdom of God that was already present in the person of the king of this kingdom, the Messiah Jesus, who was in the midst of them¹⁰¹. Another way to understand the phrase is that the kingdom was or should be "within them" meaning in their hearts. But most of the Pharisees were against Jesus, so he did not really want to tell them that the kingdom was in their hearts.

In Lk 11:20 the kingdom had already been proclaimed as present because Jesus cast out demons by the finger of God. If the Pharisees continued not to acknowledge the kingdom of God as present in the person of Jesus Christ, they would certainly miss the blessings of the future consummation of the kingdom which would be ushered in on the day of the son of man (Lk 17:24) or on the day when the son of man would be revealed (Lk 17:30).

99. Wilfrid Haubeck and Heinrich von Siebenthal, *Neuer sprachlicher Schlüssel zum Neuen Testament*. Band 1 Matthäus - Apostelgeschichte; Band 2 Römer - Offenbarung. Elektronische Fassung. (Giessen: Brunnen, 2002) under Mt 6:10.

100. Οὐκ ἔρχεται ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ παρατηρήσεως, 21 οὐδὲ ἐροῦσιν· Ἴδού ὧδε ἢ· Ἐκεῖ ἰδοὺ γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστιν.

101. ἐντὸς ὑμῶν

Therefore after the short answer to the Pharisees in 17:20-21, the section of Lk 17:22-37 is directed to the disciples.

The introduction to the parable of the ten minas (Lk 19:11) makes it clear that Jesus wanted to remove a misunderstanding from his disciples:

As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.¹⁰²

This parable introduces an intermediate time during which the disciples of Christ have to work under his instructions during his absence and wait for Christ's second coming. Those who have proven themselves faithful servants in his absence will be entrusted with great authority at the time of his second coming.

Beginning with the resurrection of Christ Paul explains the eschatological development of the kingdom in 1 Cor 15:20-28: The beginning and the end of the progress of the kingdom of God is clear. The beginning is Christ's resurrection. The end is the defeat of the last enemy after which Christ delivers the kingdom to God the Father. In 15:54-57 the defeat of death is identified with the resurrection day of the believers. This is when Christ will have destroyed "every rule and every authority and power" on the same day of his coming.

In 2 Tm 4:1-2 Paul urges Timothy to persevere in his (evangelistic 4:5!) service reminding him of Christ's kingdom. According to Heb 1:8 "the scepter of uprightness" is the scepter of Christ's kingdom.¹⁰³ When obedient believers are promised that "there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pt 1:11), it is clear that the final consummation of Christ's kingdom is meant.

In Rv 12:10-12 the fact that the devil is thrown out of heaven is celebrated from a heavenly perspective: Heaven can already rejoice because the expulsion of the devil marks the triumph of the kingdom of God over this adversary. It is an important step in the progress of God's kingdom,

102. ὅτι παραχρῆμα μέλλει ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναφαίνεσθαι•

103. καὶ ἡ ῥάβδος τῆς ἐνθύτητος ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου.

but the result is that the devil's great wrath causes havoc on the earth for a "short time".¹⁰⁴

The time described at the seventh trumpet in Rv 11:15 marks the very end:

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

Here the kingdoms of the world are done away with and God and his Christ have taken over. In the same context "the time for the dead to be judged and for rewarding your servants" has come (Rv 11:18).

In Lk 21:8-30 Jesus speaks about developments during the end times before his coming and then he says (Lk 21:31):

So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.¹⁰⁵

In Heb 12:26-29 we are promised that the coming kingdom is unshakable:

26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 27 This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

The writer speaks of "that time" pointing back to Exodus 20 when God shook the earth and proclaimed the Ten Commandments. The Old Testament promise of "once more" shaking not only the earth but also the heavens

104. εἰδὼς ὅτι ὀλίγον καιρὸν ἔχει

105. ὅτι ἐγγύς ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ

is taken from Haggai 2:6. The coming unshakable kingdom is thought to be present after the removal of the shakable order. This means that it belongs to the new heavens and the new earth which are eternal and full of righteousness (compare 2 Pt 3:13).

17.4 Words Used for the Second Coming of Christ

The New Testament speaks quite often of the second coming of Christ which the believing church is eagerly waiting for. To lay a good foundation to understand this subject it will be good to look at three Greek words which are used for the second coming of Christ at the end of this age of the world: *parousia*¹⁰⁶ which is often translated as "coming", *apokalypsis*¹⁰⁷ which can be translated as "revelation" and *ēphania*¹⁰⁸ as "appearing" or "manifestation".

17.4.1 Appearing or Manifestation (ēphania)

In the New Testament only Paul uses this word and only for the manifestation of Jesus Christ as God either in his first (2 Tm 1:10) or in his second coming (2 Thes 2:8; 1 Tm 6:14; 2 Tm 4:1.8; Tit 2:13). Because this is an important emphasis, let us look at all the verses.

In 2 Tm 1:9-10 Paul himself is imprisoned and wants to encourage Timothy to be ready to suffer for the gospel "by the power of God, who saved us ... not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."¹⁰⁹

God gives his grace according to His purpose (compare Eph 1:3-4). God saved us "not because of our works" but because of his own decision

106. ἡ παρουσία

107. ἡ ἀποκάλυψις

108. ἡ ἐπιφάνεια

109. φανερωθεῖσαν δὲ νῦν διὰ τῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καταργήσαντος μὲν τὸν θάνατον φωτίσαντος δὲ ζωὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου

to give his grace to Paul and Timothy and all the other chosen ones.

There are two sides to this grace which God gives His elect according to his purpose, the eternal side (1:9) and the historical side (1:10): This grace "has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." The manifestation of Christ as God happens in history through his abolishing death and revealing eternal life in His own resurrection from the dead after his crucifixion. This is also made known to people "through the gospel". The instant a chosen man or woman of God hears the gospel and accepts it, this eternal grace of God becomes visible in their accepting of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

In all other instances the word *ēpiphania* is used by Paul for the second coming of Christ at the end of this age of the world, as for example in 2 Thes 2:8:

8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.¹¹⁰

The "lawless one" is an important enemy of God who will be killed only with a word from the mouth of Christ which Paul has worded according to the prophecy in Is 11:4. The phrase "by the appearance of his coming (*parousia*)" or by the "manifestation of his coming" means that Jesus will be manifest as God in his coming leaving no chance for this lawless "pseudo-god". Jesus is the judge and one sentence uttered through the breath of his mouth seals the eternal condemnation of this enemy of God.

In 1 Tm 6:13-16 Paul admonishes Timothy in a very solemn way to be faithful until Jesus Christ's coming manifestation as God (see also 2 Tm 4:1-2). The manifest coming of Jesus Christ as God is one of the greatest motivations for his servants to do their work faithfully and not to stop doing it.

In this letter only a few verses ahead Paul shows us that the same idea also encourages him (4:8). In this context Paul reflects on his possible com-

110. καὶ τότε ἀποκαλυφθήσεται ὁ ἄνομος, ὃν ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς ἀνελεῖ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ καταργήσει τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ

ing death (4:6-7). But he loves the coming manifestation of Jesus Christ as God and Lord together with innumerable others. He is looking forward to receive the crown of righteousness out of the hand of his beloved Lord.

In his letter to Titus the apostle Paul speaks of the appearance of God's grace in the first coming of Christ which changed the lives of many so that they now lead a holy life full of hope for the coming manifestation of Jesus Christ as God (Ti 2:11-14).

17.4.2 Revelation (apōkalypsis)

The word "revelation" (apōkalypsis) is used in the New Testament in many different ways. Most often it is used as a spiritual gift or an activity of the Holy Spirit through which God's Spirit reveals some truth which God wants to teach his church (1 Cor 14:6,26; 2 Cor 12:1,7; Gal 1:12; 2:2; Eph 1:17). A special case of this is when a mystery is revealed (Rom 16:25; Eph 3:3). The first words of the book of Revelation can be understood in this same sense (Rv 1:1):

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place.¹¹¹

In Rom 8:19 "the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God".¹¹² From Col 4:3-4 we learn that "the revealing of the sons of God" will happen when Christ will be revealed, that is on the day of Christ's second coming. On the same day God's righteous judgment will be revealed (Rom 2:5).

In the prophetic words of Simeon about Jesus as a baby in his arms Christ is in His person the salvation and a light of revelation to the non-Israelite nations of the world (Lk 2:29-32):

29 "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;

111. Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ, ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει

112. ἡ γὰρ ἀποκαταδοκία τῆς κτίσεως τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται•

30 for my eyes have seen your salvation
 31 that you have prepared
 in the presence of all peoples,
 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles,¹¹³
 and for glory to your people Israel.”

Simeon's words point back to Is 42:6 and 49:6.9. These verses belong to the passages which present the sufferings and the glory of the special servant of the Lord in Isaiah (42:1-12; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). Maybe that is the reason why he had such deep insight into the coming suffering of the Messiah Jesus that he could warn Mary of the pains for her ahead (Lk 2:34-35).

The following verses speak of the revelation of Christ in the context of his second coming (1 Cor 1:7; 2 Thes 1:7; 1 Pt 1:7; 1:13; 4:13). The apostles Paul and Peter use this term in this meaning.

At the beginning of his first letter to the Corinthians Paul thanks God for the grace given to them "7 so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,¹¹⁴ 8 who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:7-8). When Jesus Christ will come back again "in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" he will also be revealed. We note that the believers serve each other with their spiritual gifts and are at the same time waiting for the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that He will be revealed as Lord in his divine glory.

The next section we want to look at is 2 Thes 1:7 within the context of Paul's thanksgiving for their faith and love and steadfastness (2 Thes 1:3-10):

... and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as
 to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his
 mighty angels¹¹⁵

113. φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν

114. ἀπεκδεχομένους τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

115. εἴπερ δίκαιον παρὰ θεῶ ἀνταποδοῦναι ... ὑμῖν τοῖς θλιβομένοις ἄνεσιν μεθ ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ ἀπ οὐρανοῦ μετ ἀγγέλων δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ

In 1:3-4 Paul thanks God for their love and faith and steadfastness in all the persecutions they are enduring. God's righteous judgment will change the situation totally: The afflicted believers will be given relief and those who afflict them will be repaid with affliction (1:5-6). The time for both actions of God (repaying with affliction and giving relief) is given in 1:7-8 as "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God" and further in 1:10 as "when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed". These words make it very clear that the relief for the believers and the judgment of the unbelievers happens in the same coming of Jesus Christ which is called "revelation" (apōkalyptōsis) in 1:7.

Peter uses the same word in the same sense in a very similar context of the suffering of the believers and the praise we owe God (1 Pt 1:7):

... so that the tested genuineness of your faith - more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire - may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁶

They have been born again by God's mercy and initiative (1:3) to an eternal inheritance (1:4) and are guarded by God's power through faith for their final salvation (1:5). This means that they can rejoice in spite of their sufferings (1:6), so that their tested faith may result in something wonderful and glorious "at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (see also 1 Pt 1:13; 4:13).

The revelation of Christ is here not only the end of their sufferings, but the day when they will be rewarded: As they had a share in Christ's sufferings, they will have a share in the joy of the revelation of His glory (compare 2 Cor 4:16-18; Rom 8:17-18).

17.4.3 Coming (parōusia)

The Greek word parōusia means literally "presence" and is also translated as such in Phil 2:12-13. Here Paul speaks of his own presence or absence

116. ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

in Philippi. In 2 Cor 10:10 Paul quotes his adversaries who say about him "his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account".

But most often *parōusia* is translated by 'coming': If somebody is absent and then is 'present', this is most naturally translated with his "coming". So we have the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus mentioned in 1 Cor 16:17, the coming of Titus in 2 Cor 7:6.7 and of Paul in Phil 1:26. A special case is the coming of "the lawless one" in 2 Thes 2:9 because it is of eschatological significance (2 Thes 2:9-12).

In 17 cases of the 24 instances in the New Testament the word *parōusia* is used for the coming of the "Lord" or "Jesus Christ". We find the coming of the day of God (2 Pt 3:12), or the coming of the "Lord" (James 5:7.8), or "his" coming (2 Pt 3:4; 1 John 2:28) or the coming of the son of man (Mt 24:27.37.39) or the coming of Jesus (Mt 24:3; 1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thes 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thes 2:1; 2:8; 2 Pt 1:16).

Sometimes it has been said that *parōusia* is used in 1 Thes 4:15 for a secret coming of Jesus for his church as the bride and that this stands in contrast to *ēpiphania* as the manifestation of Jesus on the day of his second coming for the world. One influential proponent of the idea of such a two phase coming of Christ was the British evangelist John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). We will discuss his theory below. Here it is enough to say that the word *parōusia* does not imply secrecy in itself. The context has to show whether the coming of somebody is secret or not.

In most or all of the 24 uses of *parōusia* in the New Testament it is clear that it is not a secret coming or presence. In addition to this it seems that a look at Mt 24:27 in the context of 24:23-27 forbids the expectation of a secret coming of Christ altogether:

23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand. 26 So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be

the coming of the Son of Man.¹¹⁷

Jesus tells his disciples not to believe any idea of a secret coming of Christ in a desert or in a private place of a house, because the coming of the Son of Man will be as public as lightning which is visible from one end of the sky to the other.

17.5 The Olivet Discourse - Is there a Sign of the Coming of Christ?

The most important and ground breaking passage of the New Testament about the end times is found in Mt 24, Mk 13 and Lk 21. Here we find the foundational teaching of Jesus about eschatology, and Mk 13:1-2 tells us how it came about.

1 And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" 2 And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

The subject of the coming destruction of the temple was a very dangerous one. To sin against the temple of God in words or in deeds was a capital offense. It was the main way of the Jewish enemies of the Christians to accuse them and to try to kill them (Mt 26:61; Acts 6:13-14; 21:28).

Therefore it is not surprising that the main part of this discourse of Jesus about the end times was a private teaching lesson for only four disciples, the closest co-workers and friends of Jesus, the four apostles whose names come first in every available list of apostles in the New Testament (Mt 10:2; Mk 3:16-18; Lk 6:14; Acts 1:13).

117. ὥσπερ γὰρ ἡ ἀστραπὴ ἐξέρχεται ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν καὶ φαίνεται ἕως δυσμῶν, οὕτως ἔσται ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου•

17.5.1 The question of the disciples

This has to be understood in order to follow Jesus's answer to this question:

Mt 24:3

3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying,

“Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?”

Εἰπόν ἡμῖν πότε ταῦτα ἔσται, καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον τῆς σῆς παρουσίας καὶ συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος.

Mk 13:3-4

3 And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

4 “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?”

Εἰπόν ἡμῖν πότε ταῦτα ἔσται, καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα συντελεῖσθαι πάντα.

Lk 21:7

And they asked him,

“Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?”

Διδάσκαλε, πότε οὖν ταῦτα ἔσται, καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα γίνεσθαι;

The disciples ask in Matthew, Mark and Luke, "When will these things be, and what will be the sign..." This is where all three agree. But there are also differences. In Mark and Luke the requested "sign" is related to "these things" taking place which will relate to the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem. In Matthew it is the "sign of your coming and of the close of the age". In the question which all three have "When will these things be...", "these things" also point to the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem.

So we can see, that the question in Matthew has the widest scope, including the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem and the coming of Christ and the "close of the age". We have already looked at the different words for the coming of Christ and their meaning. The "close of the age" or "end of the age" is mentioned in Mt 13:39; 13:40; 13:49; 24:3; 28:20; "the end of the ages" is found in Heb 9:26. In Heb 9:26 Christ "has ap-

peared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself". According to this Christ's first coming in the flesh and his death already belong to "the end of the ages" (ages used in the plural).¹¹⁸

In Mt 13 the phrase "close of the age" is used in the explanation of the parables of the weeds and of the net. It points to the day of judgment (13:39-43, 49-50). According to Mt 13 the angels throw the wicked into the "fiery furnace" at the "close of the age". Only the righteous remain in the kingdom of their father and have glorified bodies shining like the sun. According to Mt 28:19-20 Christ promises to be with the believers until the end of the age while they "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them" and "teaching them".

The "end of the age" according to these sections in Matthew is the end of the world as we know it: The wicked will be separated from the righteous and thrown into the fire of hell. The righteous will be revealed in glorified bodies, and the time and the opportunity to make disciples of all nations will be over (compare Rom 11:25). Now when we come back to Mt 24:3, we can understand what the disciples mean when they ask for the sign "of the coming" of Jesus and "of the close of the age". Both have to be understood as happening at the same time: The coming of Jesus is the close of the age on judgment day. It is the end of the world as we know it.

17.5.2 An outline of the Olivet discourse

1. Worldwide part (Mt 24:4-14; Mk 13:5-13; Lk 21:8-19)
2. Israel specific part (Mt 24:15-28; Mk 13:14-23; Lk 21:20-24)
3. Return of Christ (Mt 24:29-31; Mk 13:24-27; Lk 21:25-27)
4. When? (Mt 24:32-25:13; Mk 13:28-37; Lk 21:28-36).

The Olivet discourse of Jesus can be divided into a *worldwide part* (Mt 24:4-14; Mk 13:5-13; Lk 21:8-19) which covers the whole history from that time up to the second coming of Christ (up to "the end" in Mt 24:14).

Then there is a *Jerusalem and Israel specific part* which answers the question of the disciples what the "sign" will be that Jerusalem and the tem-

118. Compare with 1 Cor 10:11: "Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come." εἰς οὓς τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων κατήντηκεν.

ple will be destroyed (Mt 24:15-28; Mk 13:14-23; Lk 21:20-24). Including Luke 21:24, this not only covers the time of the Jewish war with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. as a climax but also all history afterwards "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled". Certain elements of temptation and disaster which are given in the first part (Mt 24:4-14) are repeated here with specific application to Jerusalem (war and flight, distress, famine, false prophets and false Christs).

After this comes the third part of the discourse which talks about the *second coming of Christ* and what happens immediately before it (Mt 24:29-31; Mk 13:24-27; Lk 21:25-27).

The fourth and last part gives an answer to the time question of the disciples ("when"?; Mt 24:32-25:13¹¹⁹; Mk 13:28-37; Lk 21:28-36).

17.5.3 What things are characteristic of the end times?

When Jesus teaches his disciples about the characteristics of the end times until he comes again, he does it with a purpose. The most important part of his discourse is what he commands. We have to follow his commandments to get a real understanding of this teaching. These characteristics are important as far as they are combined with imperatives. Therefore, when we go through the list of things that will happen in the end times, we have to look out for the imperatives. At the same time we can take his discourse as a framework and an outline to talk about the different characteristics in the context of the letters and Revelation as far as they are touched on there.

1. False Christs and false prophets

While the disciples ask for the time and the sign of these things to happen, Christ starts his answer talk with an imperative neither to trust the false Christs nor to be led astray (Mt 24:4-5; cf. Mk 13:5-6 and Lk 21:8:)

119. Matthew has some additional material going beyond the time question in Mt 25:14-46.

See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, "I am the Christ," and they will lead many astray.

As deception and people being led astray is one of the challenges of the end times, the gift of sound teaching is very much needed. One characteristic of sound teaching is to present the person of Jesus Christ and his glory in a way that the true believers will not be attracted by false Christs and false prophets.

The warning is repeated a little later (Mt 24:23-27); cf. Mk 13:21-23). The believers are warned that, when Christ will come again, he will be widely visible like the lightning that is seen from everywhere under heaven. There is no secret coming of Christ into a desert or into a room. They do not have to investigate and go there, because Christ will come visibly.

The apostle John has coined a special word for false Christs which only he uses: antichrist and antichrists. The Greek preposition "anti" can mean that the "antichrist" is "against Christ" or is "a (false) substitute for Christ". John explains (1 John 2:18-19,22-23):

18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.¹²⁰ 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us... 22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

From these verses it becomes clear that John sees the "antichrist" as a person who is "against" Christ, who denies that Jesus is the Christ and that Jesus is the Son of God. That true Christology is the main means to take the mask

120. Παιδιά, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν, καὶ καθὼς ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγόνασιν• ὅθεν γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν.

off the face of the antichrists is also taught in 1 John 4:1-3. The key truth here is the incarnation of God in his Son, Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God who is the Spirit of truth (4:6) affirms it. The "spirit of the antichrist" who is "the spirit of error" (4:6) denies it. The idea that the antichrists "do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh" is also found in 2 John 1:7.

False prophets go hand in hand with false Christs as we have already seen in Mt 24:24, Mk 13:22 and in 1 John 4:1-3. They are ravenous wolves "who come ... in sheep's clothing" (Mt 7:15). They are many and lead many astray (Mt 24:11; 2 Pt 2:1-2) and are very popular (Lk 6:26).

Another word for them is false teachers 2 Pt 2:1. Paul overcomes the evil influence of the false prophet Bar-Jesus and leads the proconsul of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, to faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 13:6-12). The second beast of Rv 13 which performs great signs of deception and persecutes the saints with the death penalty and makes business impossible for them (Rv 13:13-18) is called a false prophet in Rv 16:13, 19:20 and 20:10.

2. Disrespect for God's law and God's revelation

Connected with the false prophets is the increasing lawlessness (anōmia) in the end times in the context of Mt 24:11-12:

11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.

12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.¹²¹

The relationship between "lawlessness" and "love growing cold" can be easily understood. If the summary of God's law and revelation is loving God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as yourself (Mt 22:34-40) then the rejection of God's law and God's word will lead to the disappearance of true love. The same connection between false prophets and lawlessness is found in Mt 7:15-16, 21-23.

The false prophets of 7:15 and their disciples are the "workers of lawlessness" of 7:23. The "workers of lawlessness" are thrown into the fiery furnace in Mt 13:41-42. In Mt 23:27-28 the scribes and Pharisees are said

121. καὶ διὰ τὸ πληθυνθῆναι τὴν ἀνομίαν ψυγίσεται ἡ ἀγάπη τῶν πολλῶν.

to be "full of hypocrisy and lawlessness". In Rom 4:7 and Heb 10:17 "lawless deeds" and "sins" are used as synonyms. This is exactly the message of 1 Jn 3:4:

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.¹²²

Lawlessness is the opposite of righteousness in Rom 6:19, 2 Cor 6:14 and Heb 1:9. According to Ti 2:14 Jesus "gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."

That such people will stand in contrast to their surrounding world is evident from 2 Tm 3:1-9 where Paul gives a vivid picture of misguided people in the last days. One important parallel of Mt 24:12 in the New Testament is the famous passage of Paul about the "the man of lawlessness" (2 Thes 2:3) and the "mystery of lawlessness" (2 Thes 2:7) in 2 Thes 2:3-10. This passage clearly teaches that the revelation of the lawless one at the end of the end times is only a climax of something that had already started at the time of Paul ("the mystery of lawlessness is already at work" 2:7). Therefore 2 Thes 2:3-12 is a close parallel of Mt 24:12. The deceitful signs and wonders of the lawless one reflect other passages about the false Christs and false prophets and give the same warning of deceiving miracles (see above Mt 24:24; Mk 13:22; Rv 13:13-14; Mt 7:22).

3. Wars and revolutions

Wars will also be characteristic for the end times (pōlēmoſ; Mt 24:6-8; compare Mark 13:7; Lk 21:9):

6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.¹²³ 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom

122. Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ, καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία.

123. μελλήσετε δὲ ἀκούειν πολέμους καὶ ἀκοὰς πολέμων• ὁρᾶτε, μὴ θροεῖσθε• δεῖ γὰρ γενέσθαι, ἀλλ' οὐπω ἐστὶν τὸ τέλος.

against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

Of course, there have been wars and revolutions throughout history. Perhaps here, we are told that there will be wars so that we can know beforehand that the world cannot have lasting peace without acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord who is the prince of peace (Is 9:6-7; Mi 5:5).

But the most important emphasis here is on the imperative and the negative time information: "See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet." The normal inclination of the human heart is to be shocked and terrified when war comes close. Jesus challenges his disciples to trust God even in such very difficult times and not to be alarmed or paralyzed. They have to continue to do what they are supposed to do, endure to the end and spread the Gospel (Mt 24:13-14).

These wars are not the end. Together with famines and earthquakes they only signal the closer coming end as growing birth pains signal the immediate birth of a baby. As the birth pains grow in intensity and the times of rest in between get shorter, so wars will grow in their catastrophic dimensions and the times of rest for the world may get shorter until the new birth takes place and the world is born again (Mt 19:28; Rom 8:22).

In the book of Revelation "war" or "battles" are also an important subject with regard to the end times. The "locusts" of the fifth trumpet were in appearance "like horses prepared for battle" or war (Rv 9:7). The "noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle" (Rv 9:9). When the two special witnesses of Jesus Christ mentioned in Rv 11 "have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them" (Rv 11:7). We learn now about a special war in heaven in Rv 12:7-9:

7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the de-

ceiver of the whole world - he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

It seems that Satan's expulsion from heaven is the prelude of the last times of war and battles on earth (Rv 12:17-13:7).

Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea. 13:1 And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads... 5 And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. 6 It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. 7 Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.

The time frame given here is 42 months or three and a half years. This first beast in Rv 13 seems to be the same as "the beast that rises from the bottomless pit" in Rv 11:7. Here and there the beast seems to have the victory over the saints of God. Nobody seems to be able to cope with it and fight it: "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

But it is based on a great lie. The dragon who empowers the beast has just been defeated by God's heavenly army of angels under the leadership of the archangel Michael. The name "Michael" means "Who is like God?" The answer is, of course, nobody. The two questions "Who is like God?" and "Who is like the beast?" resemble the contrast of truth and deception. The true ruler of history is not the dragon, but God who is the hidden agent even in Rv 13 where he is hidden in the divine passive "it was given to him" (Rv 13:5.5.7.7.14.15).

In Rv 16:14 unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet and go forth to convince the kings of the world to join the war at the place of Armageddon. "Armageddon"¹²⁴

124. Ἀρμαγεδών

is probably from the Hebrew "Har Megiddo"¹²⁵ "Mountain of Meggido". Meggido is a place in Israel where sometimes battles have been fought during the time of the Old Testament (see 2 Kgs 23:29; Zec 12:11). It lies on the main route connecting Egypt with Mesopotamia. The unclean spirits convince the kings by performing signs.

According to Rv 19:19 "the beast and the kings of the earth" will then be "gathered to make war against" Jesus Christ and his army at the time of his second coming.

When Satan will be released from his prison after one thousand years he "will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea" (Rv 20:7-8).¹²⁶

Revolutions are only mentioned by Luke in his version of the Olivet discourse (akatastasia in Lk 21:9¹²⁷) as a characteristic of the end times. The same word is used in 1 Cor 14:33 and is translated as "confusion" in the ESV: "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace." In 2 Cor 6:5 it can be rendered with "riots", in 2 Cor 12:20 and James 3:16 with "disorder". Looking at James 3:16 we can realize that the revolutions of the end times are also a revelation of the human heart.

4. Earthquakes

Earthquakes are also to be counted amongst "the beginning of the birth pains" of the new world (sēismōs¹²⁸; Mt 24:7 and Mk 13:8; cf. Lk 21:11). For the disturbance of the sea in Mt 8:24 the same Greek word sēismōs is used. There was a great earthquake in connection with the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ which was understood by the "the centurion and those who were with him" as a sign of God (Mt 27:54; Mt 28:2).

125. הר מגדו

126. There are some more verses in the New Testament which contain references to wars or battles but they are not related to eschatology: Lk 14:31; 1 Cor 14:8; Heb 11:34; Jas 4:1.

127. ὅταν δὲ ἀκούσητε πολέμους καὶ ἀκαταστασίας, μὴ πτοηθῆτε•

128. σεισμὸς

In Acts 16:26 God uses an earthquake to unfasten the bonds of the prisoners, Paul and Silas included, and to prepare the jailer and his family for receiving salvation. In the introduction of the seven trumpets an earthquake is mentioned (Rv 8:5) together with peals of thunder, rumblings, and flashes of lightning reminding the reader of theophanies in the Old Testament (Ex 19:16-18; 20:18; 1 Kgs 19:11-12). The same is true for the closing section of the seven trumpets (Rv 11:19) and of the seven bowls Rv 16:18).

As the resurrection of Christ was accompanied by an earthquake so the resurrection and ascension of his two special witnesses who resemble Moses and Elijah (see the theophanies in Ex 19-20 and 1 Kgs 19!) will be accompanied by an enormous earthquake in Jerusalem (Rv 11:5-13) killing 7000 people and converting the rest.

While the seven trumpets have three references to earthquakes, the seven seals and the seven bowls have one each, related to the sixth seal (Rv 6:12) and the seventh bowl (Rv 16:18). Because the 7th seal in Rv 8:1 consists only of "silence in heaven for about half an hour", all three groups of seven have an earthquake as part of their completing action. The great earthquake of the sixth seal is related to the fact that "every mountain and island was removed from its place" (Rv 6:12.14) and the great earthquake of the seventh bowl is related to the fact that "every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found" (Rv 16:18-20).

5. Fatal diseases

It is only Luke who gives us this information about "plagues or pestilences" in the last times in his version of the Olivet discourse of Jesus (Lk 21:11¹²⁹). He uses the same Greek word "löimōs" when he describes how the Jews accused Paul before the governor of Judea, Felix (Acts 24:5) to be "plague".

Since this prediction of Christ in Luke 21:11 history has seen many outbreaks of fatal illnesses killing millions and millions of people. In spite of the great progress of medical sciences over the last generations there are still enormous outbreaks. The commandment "Love your neighbor as yourself" urges the disciples of Christ to help suffering people. But at the same time

129. σεισμοί τε μεγάλοι καὶ κατὰ τόπους λιμοὶ καὶ λοιμοὶ ἔσονται

this prediction shows us that illnesses will not be totally overcome before the second coming of Christ.

6. Famines

All three evangelists point to famines in the context of wars as part of the end times (limōs¹³⁰; Mt 24:7; Mk 13:8; Lk 21:11). In the New Testament the word is used for famines in the time of Joseph (Acts 7:11) and of Elijah (Lk 4:25). In the parable of the prodigal son famine brings the lost son to his senses. He returns home and causes great joy (Lk 15:14; Lk 15:17).

A great example for a Christian approach to a famine is found in Acts 11:28-30: The prophet Agabus foretells the famine, then the believers in Antioch answer by collecting money for those who need it most in Judea, "sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul".

Even a famine is under the control of God and can not separate us from the love of Christ (Rom 8:35). The sufferings of the apostle Paul included famine and thirst (2 Cor 11:27). The fourth seal pictures amongst other things famine striking the earth (Rv 6:7-8). Here we see famine associated with war (the sword). Famine and pestilence are often the tragic outcomes of war. War destroys the resources and infrastructure of a country, famine follows, then malnourished people die from diseases because they do not have enough strength to fight them. The plagues causing the downfall of the proud and bloodthirsty city of Babylon include famine (Rv 18:7-8).

7. Terrifying great signs from heaven

Only Luke mentions signs from heaven in this earlier part of the discourse (Lk 21:11):

And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.¹³¹

The phrase "terrors and great signs from heaven" can be understood as "terrifying great signs from heaven". In the Bible there are also sometimes

130. All three use the plural for famines: λιμοί.

131. φόβητρά τε καὶ σημεῖα ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ μεγάλα ἔσται.

"good signs" from heaven or "encouraging signs" from heaven. In Lk 2:9-15 it was clear that the angels came from heaven and returned to heaven after having given their message of joy and salvation. Ahaz could have chosen a sign from heaven to encourage him to have faith in God in the time of war (Is 7:11), but he declined. Here the meaning of Jesus is that the great heavenly signs will cause fear. They will not give joy or encouragement.

When we look at the word for "sign", we can note down that this is the first time that Jesus has used the word "sign" which the disciples have asked for in their question according to Mt 24:3: "What will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?"

Often people speak of "the signs of the times" and they mean "earthquakes, wars, famines, plagues" etc. But the word "sign" is not used by Jesus himself for these things. They are certain things which happen in the times before the end, but they are not named "signs" by Christ. He calls them "the beginning of the birth pains".

So it is better to prefer to use "the sign of your coming and of the close of the age" in a narrower sense, something which happens that signals that the end is really near. When we look at the later mention of this subject in the same discourse, it becomes clear that the signs from heaven mentioned there have this effect of pointing to the end of the world.

8. Persecution of the disciples of Christ

In the version according to Matthew, Jesus touches on the subject of the persecution of his disciples after the "beginning of the birth pains" (Mt 24:6-8 wars, famines, earthquakes) in the midst of which Jesus had said "... but the end is not yet" (Mt 24:6).¹³² But now in this second section of his discourse Jesus speaks about certain characteristics of the end times including persecution and then closes with "... and then the end will come" (Mt 24:14).¹³³ This puts the two beginning sections (Mt 24:5-8 and 24:9-14) into a relationship of "beginning of the birth pains" which have to happen and "completing characteristics of the end times". Now, let us have a look

132. ἀλλ οὐπω ἐστὶν τὸ τέλος.

133. καὶ τότε ἔξει τὸ τέλος.

at this second section (Mt 24:9-14):

9 Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

We have already mentioned the temptation of being led astray by false Christs or prophets which seems to go through the different stages of this discourse (Mt 24:5 the first thing mentioned; 24:11 in our section here and later in 24:23-28). We have also seen that "lawlessness" (24:12) is related to the false teaching of the false Christs and false prophets.

Salvation is reserved for those who endure to the end (24:13) in spite of the temptation of heretical teachings by false prophets and in spite of the temptation of persecution (24:9-10). 24:13 has the emphasis of this section. It is not phrased as an imperative grammatically, but it is a command to endure to the end according to its content.

While all three evangelists talk about persecution in their version of the Olivet discourse (Mt 24:9-11,13; Mk 13:9,11-13; Lk 21:12-19) Mark and Luke record some statements of Jesus to encourage the disciples within the context of the temptation of persecution which Matthew had given before in another context (see Mt 10:16-39).

In Mark the worldwide proclamation of the gospel, the persecution of the church and the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the disciples giving testimony in court are all intertwined. Jesus wants the disciples to be on their guard and not to be anxious. What a picture of the Savior who can protect us in our inmost beings even in the midst of the greatest troubles and at the same time build his church amongst the nations! Luke notes in the persecution context (21:18) that "not a hair of your head will perish."

The subject of persecution is found throughout the New Testament and especially as part of the prophecies of Revelation (see Rv 6:9-11; 11:3-12;

12:4-6; 12:12-18; 13:5-11; 14:12-13; 16:15).

9. Proclamation of the gospel to all nations

The great commission of Jesus is to evangelize all nations (Mt 28:18-20; Lk 24:44-49; Mk 16:15-20; Acts 1:8). This is fulfilled and will be fulfilled while the disciples of Jesus are persecuted and hated all over the world. While the world targets the disciples, the Holy Spirit evangelizes the world (Mt 24:14; Mk 13:10). It seems that some of the writers of the New Testament have already felt that the gospel is a world wide entity. Compare Acts 1:8 with Acts 28:28-31. Paul definitely thought this (Col 1:5-6).

One interesting question can be asked with regard to "all nations" which should be evangelized (Mt 28:19).¹³⁴ The table of nations in Genesis 10 gives 70 grandsons of Noah which have been understood as 70 tribes of mankind in Jewish tradition.¹³⁵ Today we know of the existence of thousands of "nations" or "tribes". So how could you tell that all nations have been reached with the gospel? Do you take 70 tribes or nations from Gn 11 or do you take some modern number? There is one helpful text in the New Testament, and indeed in the Olivet discourse to help us understand what "all nations" could mean in this context (Lk 21:24) which is at the same time a context of the first century:

They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive
among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot
by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.¹³⁶

The statement of Jesus in Greek that the Jews will "be led captive among all nations" is an equivalent to the other statement in Mt 24:12 that the gospel will be preached "as a testimony to all nations".¹³⁷ When the Jewish war

134. πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη

135. See F. Keil C. F.; Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, Martin, James <trans> (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 172.

136. καὶ πεσοῦνται στόματι μαχαίρης καὶ αἰχμαλωτισθήσονται εἰς τὰ ἔθνη πάντα, καὶ Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἔσται πατουμένη ὑπὸ ἐθνῶν, ἄχρι οὗ πληρωθῶσιν καιροὶ ἐθνῶν.

137. καὶ κηρυχθήσεται τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ εἰς μαρτύριον πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν.

was lost which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 C.E. many Jews were sold as slaves and had to go into a worldwide captivity fulfilling the words that the Jews will "be led captive among all nations". But, of course, we have to think of a world wide captivity according to the understanding of the first century.

We can compare Paul's statement about the gospel being worldwide with Luke's statement of worldwide captivity of the Jews. Nowadays the gospel has to be preached and spread amongst all nations which are known to us in the 21st century. The task is commanded and the task is clear.

But when we go through church history, it is interesting to see that many generations of Christians could view the world with a worldwide gospel, as Paul already did in the first century (compare also Mk 16:20 with 16:15). What I want to say with this is that we are not the ones who have to decide whether the task has been fulfilled, it will be God according to Rom 11:25:

Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.¹³⁸

God will decide "when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" or not. When the fullness has come in according to his measure, Christ will come back. We have already touched on the subject of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and the captivity of Israel. This is our next subject which we shall have to look at in detail.

10. The destruction of Jerusalem and the sufferings of the Jewish nation

The question about the destruction of Jerusalem is answered in the second part of the Olivet discourse, the Jerusalem and Israel specific part (Mt 24:15-28; Mk 13:14-23; Lk 21:20-24). The disciples had asked what the "sign" would be that Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed. Jesus does not use the word "sign" in his answer but points to very significant

138. Οὐ γὰρ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο, ἵνα μὴ ᾗτε ἑαυτοῖς φρόνιμοι, ὅτι πῶρως ἀπὸ μέρους τῷ Ἰσραὴλ γέγονεν ἄχρι οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθῃ

events which would show his disciples that the time had come. It will be helpful to compare the beginning of all three versions in a table:

Mt 24	Mk 13	Lk 21
15 So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),	14 But when you see the abomination standing where it ought not to be (let the reader understand),	20 But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.
16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.	then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.	21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it.
17 Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house,	15 Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out,	-
18 and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.	16 and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.	-

It is crystal clear that all three have the same message. Jesus urges the disciples to flee immediately to the mountains without any delay as soon as they see what happens in Mt 24:15, Mk 13:14 or Lk 21:20. There is no time to be lost. They can not fetch money, jewelry or any precious belongings, not even the cloak which lies a few meters down the field. Seconds will de-

cide about life or death. Now we are very fortunate that Luke has rendered the more literal and cryptic words of Jesus as we have them in the versions of Matthew (24:15)¹³⁹ and Mark (13:14)¹⁴⁰ in easy understandable words for his friend Theophilus (Lk 24:20)¹⁴¹. The "abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place" in Matthew is "the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not to be" in Mark and this is "Jerusalem surrounded by armies" in Luke indicating its imminent "desolation". Therefore the Christians could have understood in the ongoing Jewish war¹⁴² which started in 66 C.E. that this time it was not a good idea to flee to Jerusalem for safety, but on the contrary to flee from there as fast as one could. It is interesting that Eusebius tells us in his history of the church¹⁴³ that the Christians actually fled before the destruction of Jerusalem:

But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella.

Luke alone tells us that the disciples should flee as fast as possible "for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written" (Lk 21:22).¹⁴⁴ This presents the coming destruction of the temple and Jerusalem as a judgment of God in agreement with the prophecies of scripture. We remember that Mt 24:15 had especially pointed to the prophet Daniel. Let us continue to

139. "Όταν οὖν ἴδῃτε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου ἑστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω

140. "Όταν δὲ ἴδῃτε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως ἑστηκότα ὅπου οὐ δεῖ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω

141. "Όταν δὲ ἴδῃτε κυκλομένην ὑπὸ στρατοπέδων Ἰερουσαλήμ, τότε γνῶτε ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ ἐρήμωσις αὐτῆς.

142. For a first century account of this war see Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, Volume I: *The Wars of the Jews*, Whiston, William <trans> (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988).

143. Schaff, NPNF2-01. Eusebius Pamphilus: *Church History*, *Life of Constantine*, *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, p. 188-189 (h.e. 3.5.3).

144. ὅτι ἡμέραι ἐκδικήσεως αὐταὶ εἰσιν τοῦ πλησθῆναι πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα.

look at the threefold witness of this discourse:

Mt 24

19 And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!

20 Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

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.

Mk 13

17 And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!

18 Pray that it may not happen in winter.

19 For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be.

Lk 21

23 Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!

-

For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people.

Jesus now speaks about some special difficulties during the days of the tribulation of Jerusalem and Israel. It will be especially difficult for pregnant women and for nursing women. Jesus advises the disciples to pray that the timing of the flight will be guided by God in a way that they do not have to run in winter or on a Sabbath.

The winter is mentioned in Matthew and Mark, but the Sabbath is only in Matthew. Luke does not have any similar statement. This is in agreement with the tendency of Matthew of giving us often the more Jewish tenor of the Gospel, in spite of the fact that his book was not only written for Jews.¹⁴⁵

While Matthew¹⁴⁶ and Mark¹⁴⁷ speak of a great "tribulation" without

145. The way Matthew speaks in Mt 28:15 about the Jews makes it clear that many of his potential readers were Gentiles.

146. ἔσται γὰρ τότε θλίψις μεγάλη οἷα οὐ γέγονεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κόσμου ἕως τοῦ νῦν οὐδ' οὐ μὴ γένηται.

147. ἔσονται γὰρ αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκεῖναι θλίψις οἷα οὐ γέγονεν τοιαύτη ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κτίσεως

any equal before or afterwards, Luke speaks of "great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people"¹⁴⁸ which makes it clear that the great tribulation has to do with the Jewish nation. The word wrath will have to be understood as the "wrath of God".¹⁴⁹

The phrase "upon the earth" can also be understood more locally as "in the country" (of Judea or of Israel). Speaking of the "great tribulation" we have to note here that it is unique. It will happen only once. This Jewish great tribulation has never happened like this before and will never happen like this afterwards. It is very remarkable that the Jewish historian Josephus uses very similar language to describe the first century Jewish war with the Romans:¹⁵⁰

Accordingly it appears to me, that the misfortunes of all men, from the beginning of the world, if they be compared to these of the Jews, are not so considerable as they were; while the authors of them were not foreigners neither.

The question of the disciples was related to the destruction of the temple which happened in 70 C.E. If this great tribulation is related to this war and this destruction, it can not happen again. Otherwise it would be not unique, but double or triple etc. There will always be tribulations and persecutions for the believers as we have seen before in this discourse, but the words of Jesus do not permit us to see this unique great tribulation of Israel in the future. It has already happened in the past. There might be more tribulations for the Jews ahead, but they will be of a different kind. There will also be more tribulations ahead for the believers of all nations, but they belong into a different category.

It has become customary to speak of the time of the rapture of the church (1 Thes 4:17) in relationship with the term "tribulation". Those who think

ἦν ἔκτισεν ὁ θεὸς ἕως τοῦ νῦν καὶ οὐ μὴ γένηται.

148. ἔσται γὰρ ἀνάγκη μεγάλη ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὀργὴ τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ

149. The words of Paul in 1 Thes 2:14-16 are quite remarkable because they had been written years before the start of the Jewish war. We must remember however that the same Paul also wrote Rom 9:1-5 giving us a great testimony of his deep love for his fellow countrymen.

150. See Josephus, *The Works of Flavius Josephus, Volume I: The Wars of the Jews*, p. 5 (Preface, Section 4).

that the rapture will happen before the tribulation have a pre-tribulation view of the rapture or are "pre-trib". Those who think that the rapture will happen at some time in the midst of the tribulation have a mid-tribulation view or are "mid-trib". Those who think of the rapture happening after the tribulation have a post-tribulation view of the rapture or are "post-trib". Because we think that this unique tribulation has already happened, we are "post-trib".

Mt 24:22 (and similarly Mk 13:20) points to God's grace in the midst of this calamity:

And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

As we understand this verse to relate to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, it talks of God's mercy to shorten the days of tribulation so that there would be some survivors and that out of their numbers God would continue to elect people for his purpose of salvation.¹⁵¹

Another possibility to understand Mt 24:22 is given by D. A. Carson. He understands "those days" in 24:22 as not referring to 24:15-21 specifically but to "the general period of distress introduced by vv. 4-14 and that therefore 'those days' refers to the entire period of which vv. 15-21 are only one part - the 'great distress' (v. 21)".¹⁵²

The sufferings of the Jewish nation are further described in the version of Luke (22:24):

They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.¹⁵³

151. John Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke - Volume II*, Calvin's Commentaries, Torrance, D. W.; Torrance, Th. F. <ed>; Parker, T. H. L. <trans> (Edinburgh, 1972), p. 88-89.

152. Gaebelien, *The Expositors Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, p. 502.

153. καὶ πεσοῦνται στόματι μαχαίρης καὶ αἰχμαλωτισθήσονται εἰς τὰ ἔθνη πάντα, καὶ Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἔσται πατουμένη ὑπὸ ἐθνῶν, ἄχρι οὗ πληρωθῶσιν καιροὶ ἐθνῶν.

This is another reason why this tribulation was so great and unique: The damaging consequences would last much longer than those of any other war the Jews had experienced before and the captivity would be worldwide covering all nations. But there is also a hint in this verse that the time of suffering for Jerusalem and the Jews would come to an end. The times of the Gentiles will come to an end and with it the time of Gentile domination over Jerusalem. A direct parallel of Lk 21:24 is Rv 11:1-2:

1 Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, 2 but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.”¹⁵⁴

Paul reminds us that the time will come when all of Israel will recognize their Lord and Savior (Rom 11:25-27):

25 Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”;¹⁵⁵ 27 “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

The coming of the Savior will also be the coming of the Savior for Israel, for all of Israel. The second coming of Christ will coincide with the repentance and salvation of all living Jews. Or as Paul says in Rom 11:15 it will coincide with the resurrection of the dead:

154. 2 καὶ τὴν αὐλὴν τὴν ἔξωθεν τοῦ ναοῦ ἔκβαλε ἔξωθεν, καὶ μὴ αὐτὴν μετρήσης, ὅτι ἐδόθη τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν πατήσουσιν μῆνας τεσσεράκοντα δύο.

155. 25 Οὐ γὰρ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο, ἵνα μὴ ᾗτε ἑαυτοῖς φρόνιμοι, ὅτι πώρως ἀπὸ μέρους τῷ Ἰσραὴλ γέγονεν ἄχρι οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθῃ, 26 καὶ οὕτως πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται• καθὼς γέγραπται• “Ἦξει ἐκ Σιών ὁ ῥυόμενος, ἀποστρέψει ἀσεβείας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβ.

For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world,
what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? ¹⁵⁶

11. The heavens and the earth will pass away. The water ecosystem will become catastrophic.

That the heavens and the earth will pass away is clearly stated in Mt 24:35 (similarly Mk 13:31; Lk 21:33):

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not
pass away.¹⁵⁷

Of course, the emphasis of this statement is less on the passing away of heaven and earth but more on the fact that the words of Jesus Christ will stay for eternity, but nevertheless Jesus teaches here the end of this world. The answer to the question when this will happen is given in Mt 24:29, Mk 13:24-25, and Lk 21:25-26:

156. εἰ γὰρ ἡ ἀποβολὴ αὐτῶν καταλλαγὴ κόσμου, τίς ἢ πρόσλημις εἰ μὴ ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν;

157. ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσεται, οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρέλθωσιν.

Mt 24

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven,

and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Mk 13

24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven,

and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Lk 21

25 And there will be signs in sun and moon

and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world.

For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Carson connects the "immediately after the tribulation of those days" of Mt 24:29 with the tribulation in Mt 24:9 and not with the great tribulation of Mt 24:15-21.¹⁵⁸

There are several Old Testament texts related to the day of the Lord which use similar language (Is 13:9-10; 34:4; Joel 2:31; 3:15). But the closest parallel is found in Rv 6:12-17:

12 When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. 14 The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed

158. Gaebelein, *The Expositors Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, p. 504.

from its place.¹⁵⁹ 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, 16 calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

The language of the sixth seal is taken from the Olivet discourse and from Is 34:4; 2:10.19 and Mal 3:2. If we remember that the apostle John was one of the four original hearers of this teaching of Jesus, we have a good interpreter of it in the form of the book of Revelation.

The sun may lose its light more than once in history as happened on Good Friday (Mt 27:45). But the stars can not fall from heaven and history is still going on. The time when the stars will fall, is the time of the end of the world. This is the case in Rv 6:12-17 where all government is dissolved because all kings and leaders and just everyone is trying to jump into a hole to hide himself from God coming to judge the earth. The mountains are gone, the islands are gone, the heavens are gone. "The great day of their wrath has come", it is the end of the world. The passing away of heaven and earth is again mentioned in Rv 20:11:

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.

The fourth and fifth trumpet are also related to things happening with sun, moon and the stars of heaven (8:12; 9:1-2). Likewise the fourth and fifth bowl are related to things happening with the lights of heaven (Rv 16:8-11).

The statement that "the powers of the heavens will be shaken"¹⁶⁰ has a further parallel in Heb 12:26-27:

159. Compare the very similar statement in 16:20: "And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found."

160. καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν σαλευθήσονται.

26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 27 This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.¹⁶¹

Here the author interprets Hg 2:6 in a way that God will shake the earth and the heavens in a one time action with the purpose to exchange the temporary creation with an eternal state of affairs which he calls in 12:28 a "kingdom that cannot be shaken".¹⁶² It is reasonable to see that "the powers of the heavens will be shaken" in the Olivet discourse agrees with the "the removal of things that are shaken".

In addition to John who received the book of Revelation we have another writing apostle who was a hearer of the same discourse of Jesus, namely Peter. It is highly relevant that he also expects the day of the Lord to be the day when the old heavens and earth will pass away to be replaced by new heavens and a new earth (2 Pt 3:5-13).

The water ecosystem will become catastrophic. In the Olivet discourse this is stated only in Luke 21:25-26:

25 And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves,¹⁶³ 26 people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

The second and third trumpet in Rv 8:8-10 hit the water system of the earth. Somehow the sixth trumpet influences the river Euphrates (Rv 9:13-15).

161. 26 οὐ ἡ φωνὴ τὴν γῆν ἐσάλευσεν τότε, νῦν δὲ ἐπήγγελλται λέγων• Ἔτι ἅπαξ ἐγὼ σείσω οὐ μόνον τὴν γῆν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν οὐρανόν. 27 τὸ δὲ Ἔτι ἅπαξ δηλοῖ τῶν σαλευομένων μετὰθεσιν ὡς πεποιημένων, ἵνα μείνῃ τὰ μὴ σαλευόμενα.

162. βασιλείαν ἀσάλευτον

163. 25 Καὶ ἔσονται σημεῖα ἐν ἡλίῳ καὶ σελήνῃ καὶ ἄστροις, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς συνοχὴ ἐθνῶν ἐν ἀπορίᾳ ἤχους θαλάσσης καὶ σάλου

The power of the two witnesses in Rv 11 who resemble Moses and Elijah extends to the water ecosystem of the earth (Rv 11:6).

The second and third bowl hit the water ecosystem as well (16:3-6). Here a spiritual reason is given for the ecological catastrophe: The massive shedding of the blood of God's saints. This points straight back to the ten plagues of Egypt, especially the first in Ex 7:14-25 where the water of the Nile was turned into blood and became undrinkable. The water of the Nile had been used to drown the male children of the Israelites (Ex 1:22).

The sixth bowl is related to the river Euphrates as was the sixth trumpet (16:12):

12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.

We learn from Rv 21:1 that not only the old heaven and earth pass away but also the old water ecosystem.

12. The coming of Christ

This will be at the end of this age. The kingdoms of this world pass away and God's kingdom is revealed (Mt 24:30-31; Mk 13:26-27; Lk 21:27):

Mt 24	Mk 13	Lk 21
30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.	26 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.	27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.
31 And 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.	27 And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.	

Only Matthew speaks of "the sign of the Son of Man"¹⁶⁴ and of the "trumpet".¹⁶⁵ The sign was a signal for the eyes and the trumpet for the ears to gather crowds in the Old Testament, for feasts and especially for battles in times of war (Jer 4:21; 6:1; 51:27; Is 18:3). I think that the background of the words of Jesus according to Matthew is to be found in Is 11:10-12 and 27:12-13, both texts speak of the gathering of the people of God at the end of times.

According to Is 11:10 the "root of Jesse" who is the coming Messiah of the house of David, will himself be a sign or "a signal for the peoples" who seek him. When the same word¹⁶⁶ is used in 11:12¹⁶⁷ and it is said that

164. καὶ τότε φανήσεται τὸ σημεῖον τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ

165. καὶ ἀποστελεῖ τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ μετὰ σάλπιγγος μεγάλης

166. The Hebrew word *nēs* נֶס is used for "signal" in 11:10 and 11:12.

167. The LXX of Is 11:12 reads (Rahlfs, Septuaginta): καὶ ἄρει σημεῖον εἰς τὰ ἔθνη καὶ συνάξει τοὺς ἀπολωμένους Ἰσραὴλ καὶ τοὺς διεσπαρμένους τοῦ Ἰουδα συνάξει

God "will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel" it is reasonable to assume that the same sign or signal is meant, that is, the Messiah. If we understand Matthew's "the sign of the Son of Man" as an exegetical genitive we can understand Jesus himself as the appearing sign for the gathering of the people of God from everywhere. The disciples had asked for the sign of his coming (24:3). Now they receive the answer: The sign of the coming of Christ is he himself visible to all, coming in the clouds of heaven. The gathering of God's people is also the subject of Is 27:12-13 where the trumpet is used.

Matthew alone gives us the words of Jesus "and then all the tribes of the earth¹⁶⁸ will mourn"¹⁶⁹ (Mt 24:30). This points back to Zec 12:10-12:

10 And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. 11 On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. 12 The land shall mourn, each family by itself:¹⁷⁰ the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves...

The situation in Zec 12 is that God saves Israel from the attacks of the nations and that Israel sees and recognizes his God as the pierced one, under the influence of a great awakening and outpouring of the Holy Spirit who is called "a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy". This predicts a great prayer revival within Israel. The shocking realization that they themselves have pierced their God is the result of their pleas for mercy. Their eyes are opened and they see and recognize Jesus as their God (John 19:37).

ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων πετερίγων τῆς γῆς.

168. Or: "all tribes of the country"

169. καὶ τότε κόψονται πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς

170. The LXX reads here: καὶ κόψεται ἡ γῆ κατὰ φυλὰς φυλάς

Every family will feel such a sorrow as if they had just lost their first-born son by killing him themselves. It is a sorrow and a mourning beyond imagination, a whole country with every single family involved. It will be best to understand the words in Matthew on the backdrop of this national repentance of Israel. It will be the fulfillment of Matthew 23:39.

The other text in the New Testament which refers back to Zec 12:10-12 is Rv 1:7:

Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

"Every eye will see him" means every human being. "Even those who pierced him" is linked to the mourning Israelites in Zec 12:10 again. In that context "all tribes of the earth" could also be translated as "all tribes of the land (of Israel)". In other words Rv 1:7 can be understood as the same revival Zec 12:10-13:1 is talking about. The book of Revelation awaits the conversion of Jerusalem at the time of the end (Rv 11:5-13). The apostle John refers twice back to Zec 12:10-12, once in his gospel (John 19:37) and once in Revelation (1:7). It is possible that John had similar hopes for Israel's repentance as Paul had.

If the intension of John was to speak of all mankind when he wrote "and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him", it is still possible to think of a divided mankind in the wailing or weeping: Some could weep with faith and get saved (as is presupposed in the original context of this saying in Zec 12:10-13:1), and others could wail without faith and hope, but with desperation.

The teaching of Paul in Rom 11:25 implies an important distinction between Israel and the Gentiles at the time of the coming of Christ. The coming in of the Gentiles in fullness points to the end of the open door for them. This work and number is complete. When this has happened the partial hardening of Israel stops. All Israel recognizes Christ as the "deliverer", the Savior who forgives their sins. This fits absolutely to Zec 12:10-13:1. So even if all mankind weeps or wails at the coming of Christ, it is possible that the Israelites weep and wail within a revival and an awakening

to receive salvation, while the Gentiles will wail facing destruction (Zec 12:9):

And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

The mood of all mankind at the day of the wrath of God is also pictured in Rv 6:15-17. At the time of the sixth seal the governments of the world cease to function because the people have other things to do and the world comes to a stand still:

15 Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, 16 calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

There is no wailing mentioned here, but the mood is clear: Mankind is confronted with seeing Christ coming on his day and flees. At the time of the seventh trumpet the governments of this world come to an end as well and are replaced by the kingdom of God and his Christ (Rv 11:15-18).

The same change of power is implied in the above given parallel texts in Mt 24:30; Mk 13:26 and Lk 21:27. According to Mt 24:30 "they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."¹⁷¹ The coming of Jesus "with power and great glory"¹⁷² (Mt 24:20; Lk 21:27) or "with great power and glory"¹⁷³ (Mk 13:26) is clearly a coming to change the government of the world. Jesus takes over, he rules the world.

That is also the background of the Old Testament text to which these verses refer (Dn 7:13-14). Accordingly the coming of Christ with the clouds of heaven is the end of this age. The kingdoms of this world pass away and God's kingdom is revealed.

171. καὶ ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς.

172. μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς.

173. μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς καὶ δόξης

17.6 Understanding 1 Thes 4:13-18

This text has become so important for the understanding of the second coming of Christ that we should look at it in some detail:

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 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. 17 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, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

17.6.1 Paul's purpose (4:13.18)

in writing this is stated very clearly in the first and the last verse of this section (4:13.18): He wants to give comfort and hope to those who have lost a loved one through death. Even when he continues the subject in 5:1-11 to talk about the "the times and the seasons" of the event he is explaining here, he closes again with the purpose that they should "encourage one another" with this teaching (5:11). This is of utmost importance.

We should use sections in the Bible according to the purpose of the author if clearly recognizable. If Paul wants to comfort believers who have lost relatives through death who were also believers, we should not use the section to scare people. The way some people have used this text to teach a kind of rapture where only the totally committed Christians are taken up to Jesus, while others who are not good enough are "left behind" to go through a time of great tribulation in the world, is very scary.

I do not want to be misunderstood. I am in favor of commitment to the Lord. But not all Christians are equally committed. And some are not as confident as others. In the immediate context (5:14) Paul writes "... admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all". We should teach 4:13-18 specifically and the Gospel generally in a way that we "admonish the idle" and also "encourage the fainthearted".

17.6.2 The example of Jesus (4:14)

in his death and resurrection is the guarantee that the believers who have died ("fallen asleep") will also be resurrected through Jesus and brought with him.¹⁷⁴

17.6.3 A word from the Lord is explained (4:15-17)

by Paul in these verses.¹⁷⁵ This is another important key to understand this section. The main ideas go back to a word from the Lord Jesus.¹⁷⁶ The living believers at the time of Christ's coming will not precede those who will have died before. First those who have died before, will be resurrected. Then these resurrected will be taken up together with those who had been still alive at Christ's coming to meet the Lord Jesus in the air and both united parts will always be with the Lord. If we look for relevant and fitting words in the Gospels, the nearest parallel is found in Mt 24:27.30-31:

174. οὕτως καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς κοιμηθέντας διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἄξει σὺν αὐτῷ.

175. τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν λέγομεν ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου

176. For the word or words of the Lord see also Acts 20:35; 1 Thes 1:8; 2 Thes 3:1; 1 Tm 6:3.

15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

16 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.

17 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, and so we will always be with the Lord.

27 For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And 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 "coming of the Lord" and the "coming of the Son of Man" can be understood as the same coming of the same person. That he will "descend from heaven"¹⁷⁷ or will come "on the clouds of heaven"¹⁷⁸ can be seen as the same movement. The "descending from heaven" is written from Paul's perspective on earth at the time of writing his letter. Paul means that Christ will leave heaven and come to earth. The people who see "the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven" are also people on earth who consequently see the Son of Man coming their direction, coming to earth.

The "sound of the trumpet"¹⁷⁹ is according to Paul's statement 1 Cor 15:52 the sound of the "last trumpet". Therefore the "loud trumpet call"¹⁸⁰ of Mt 24:31 can not be a trumpet call after the last trumpet otherwise the

177. καταβήσεται ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ

178. ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ

179. ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ

180. μετὰ σάλπιγγος μεγάλης

last trumpet would not be the last trumpet. It is better to understand it as the same trumpet call we have in 1 Thes 4:14 and 1 Cor 15:52 (and Is 27:13; cf. Zec 9:14).

All these texts speak about the gathering of God's people at the end of the end times. The being "caught up together"¹⁸¹ in 1 Thes 4:17 is in the passive voice giving no information of the agent or agents transporting the believers into Christ's presence. In Mt 24:31 the angels are doing this work of gathering the believers together.¹⁸²

Again both movements can be understood as the same movement of the believers to Christ (compare Lk 21:36). Since Darby (see above) another movement has been put into the text, the movement of Christ and his gathered people from the air back to heaven to disappear. But this movement is not really part of the text, it is not mentioned.

When we think about the phrase of Paul "to meet the Lord in the air", there are two other texts in the New Testament where the same phrase is used which can help our understanding. We read in Acts 28:15:

And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us.¹⁸³ On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage.

Paul was a prisoner and on his way to Rome. The Christians in Rome heard that he was coming. They decided to come "to meet" him and his team on the way. They did not come to disappear with him to some other place, but to encourage him and honor him on the last part of his journey to Rome. Paul understood their gesture and was encouraged. The other example is in Mt 25:6:

But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'¹⁸⁴

181. ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἄρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἅερα•

182. καὶ ἀποστελεῖ τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ μετὰ σάλπιγγος μεγάλης, καὶ ἐπισυνάξουσιν τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς αὐτοῦ

183. ἦλθαν εἰς ἀπάντησιν ἡμῶν

184. Ἴδου ὁ νυμφίος, ἐξέρχεσθε εἰς ἀπάντησιν αὐτοῦ.

The virgins are called to hurry to meet the bridegroom for the last part of his way to meet his bride and the family of the bride. Again the idea is not to disappear with the bridegroom to some other place but to accompany him on the last part of his journey. The idea is to show that he is welcomed and honored and his coming very much desired.

These two parallel texts show very well what the intention of God is when he will gather the people of God to meet Jesus in the air. The movement of Jesus will be at that time to "descend" from heaven and to come down to the earth.¹⁸⁵

The fact that the church will be taken up to meet Jesus in the air is a sign of welcome. They have been waiting for Jesus and desired his coming. Now they honor Jesus by being taken up to him and by becoming part of his royal court and an expression of his glory (2 Thes 1:10). This is, of course, at the same time a great honor for the believers. To understand the coming of Christ and the gathering of his church to him in this way, is a great comfort for those who have lost loved ones (1 Thes 4:18).

17.7 Understanding the Apocalypse

17.7.1 Type of literature

The book of Revelation is also called the "Apocalypse" which is taken from the first word of the Greek text. The word denotes literally "the removal of a veil" or "revelation". It has become customary to speak of "apocalyptic literature" and Revelation is seen as such. But it is also a prophetic book (Rv 1:3; 22:10). And it has also clear marks of being a letter (Rv 1:4-6; 22:21).

Apocalyptic literature predicts an end of this world and a new world order to come. Because this world comes to an end, the last times before this end are crucial and have a special focus. Often a highly symbolic language is used, with symbolic numbers. Because of the complexity of the heavenly

185. His destination seems to be the mount of olives according to Zec 14:4 (compare Acts 1:11-12).

coded language, angelic beings may help the receiver of the apocalyptic visions as guides and interpreters.

Within the canon of the Bible "apocalyptic" material is normally found within prophetic books in the Old Testament (Is 24-27; 34-35; 65-66; Jer 30-33; Ez 36-39; Zec 9-14; Dn 2; 7-12) or in the New Testament within the prophetic book of Revelation or in the Gospels (Mt 24-25; Mk 13; Lk 21) or in the letters (2 Thes 2; 2 Pt 3; Heb 12).

My impression is that the border between the "normal prophetic" and the "apocalyptic" is not clear cut.¹⁸⁶ In the Olivet course Jesus speaks also as a prophet (Mt 21:11). The apostles Peter and Paul also seem to have been prophets at the same time (Acts 13:1; 5:3-4.9).

In interpreting the book of Revelation it is important to remember that it is a letter with a meaning for the seven churches in the first century, a prophecy which has to be heard and acted upon and an apocalypse with highly symbolic language.

17.7.2 Interpretive Schemes

There are mainly four different ways to interpret Revelation.¹⁸⁷

Futurist

The predictions of Rv 4-22 are seen as something which will be fulfilled very close to the second coming of Christ at the end of this age.

186. The LXX for example uses the Greek term *apokalypō* ἀποκαλύπτω in these texts to denote a divine activity of revealing something to someone: Nm 22:31; 24:4.16; 1 Sm 2:27; 3:7.21; 9:15; 2 Sm 7:27; Ps 98:2; 119:18; Is 53:1; 56:1; Dn 2:19.22.28; 2:29.30.47; 10:1; 11:35; Amos 3:7. Often it is said that "apocalyptic" literature originated in post-exilic Judaism. But what do we think of Is 24-27 or 34-35 and 65-66? If the book of Isaiah is seen as a unity and dated pre-exilic in the first half of the seventh century B.C. then these texts could be used to fix an earlier date of the origins of apocalyptic literature.

187. See Gaebelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews, James, 1,2 Peter, 1,2,3 John, Jude, Revelation*, p. 408-411.

Historicist

In this way of understanding the book the reader looks at history from the time of John up to his own time to recognize fulfillments of its content and to be prepared for further developments until the coming of Christ.

Preterist

According to this view the interpretation of Revelation is limited to the time of the author. Rv 4-22 describe exclusively events related to John's own time and outlook.

Idealist

Here heavy emphasis is put on the poetic, symbolic and spiritual nature of the book. This is done to such an extent that no specific historic events are seen as predicted.

All these four ways of interpretation have strengths and weaknesses. The futurist view severs the tie of the book to the seven churches of the first century which have received it in the first place. So it ignores totally the fact that Revelation is also a letter sent to the seven churches with meaning for those seven churches. But it is good that it encourages the church to look out for real future fulfillments of the prophecies and wait eagerly for Christ's coming.

Many of the historicist interpreters have identified pagan and later papal Rome with "Babylon" and in addition to this have made other identifications of "fulfillments" where there is no real consensus.

The preterist view stands in danger to ignore the prophetic character of the book with real predictions and expected fulfillments. But it is good that it tries to exhaust all possibilities of interpretations which fit into the real life setting of the first century.

The idealist view does justice to the apocalyptic character of the book with its high symbolism but seems to overdo it with ignoring the specific predictive elements which are present as well.

17.7.3 An outline of Revelation

Apart from the prologue (1:1-8) and epilogue (22:10-21) there seem to be two recognizable larger sections within the main part (1:9-22:9) of the book: The first section deals with the state of the seven churches the book was written to in the first place (1:9-3:22): The title for this section can be taken from 1:19 "Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are..." The second section from 4:1-22:9 deals according to 4:1 with future things:

Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.

This future part had already been mentioned in 1:19:

Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

It is interesting that both larger sections are introduced by a special experience of John in the Holy Spirit. 1:10 is part of the introduction of 1:9-3:22:

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet¹⁸⁸ 11 saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

And 4:2 is part of the introduction of 4:1-22:9:

2 At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.¹⁸⁹

The words "I was in the Spirit" are identical in 1:10 and 4:2, in this translation in English, and in the Greek text. These sentences are found in the introduction of both larger sections. They are structural markers showing

188. ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ, καὶ ἤκουσα ὀπίσω μου φωνὴν μεγάλην ὥς σάλπιγξ

189. εὐθέως ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι• καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος,

us that the two main parts of the book have been received through a special and deep experience of the Holy Spirit. The structure of the first major part is easily recognized because of the seven letters to the seven churches which can be counted. Seven is the number of fullness or completeness. The seven churches represent the worldwide church in her different states and aspects.

To come up with a valid structure of the second major part (4:1-22:9) needs a closer look at this body of text. One key to find the structure of Rv 4-22 are the three vision cycles of the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls. These three sections are easily recognizable with their introduction and their closure because of the persistent counting to seven.

A further step to find the structure of 4-22 is to recognize that the visions of Rv 12-14 which are contained by the 7 trumpets and the 7 bowls on either side constitute one more coherent vision cycle which is introduced by the vision of a woman (12:1-3). This gives us four sections from 4:1 to 16:21.

Now it is possible to show that the remainder from 17:1 to 22:9 can be divided into three sections by discovering the structural markers in the form of the two angels who guide John to see "Babylon the great" in 17:1-19:10 and the "New Jerusalem" in 21:9-22:9. Both sections start and end in a very similar manner. First we compare the beginning of both sections:

17:1-3

1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came

and said to me,

“Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.”

3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.

21:9-11

9 Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues

and spoke to me, saying,

“Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

It is important that the two guiding angels who show John first Babylon and then the New Jerusalem are two of the seven angels with the seven bowls of God's wrath (Rv 15-16). This creates links between Rv 15-16, 17:1-19:10 and 21:9-22:9. The relationship can be well understood because the seventh bowl implies the judgment of Babylon (16:19). Perhaps the angel who is showing John the judgment of Babylon in 17:1-19:10 is the angel of the seventh bowl. We recognize further that the completed judgment of Babylon causes a fourfold "Hallelujah" in 19:1-10. The fourth and climactic Hallelujah in 19:6-8 points in a cryptic way forward to the "Bride of the Lamb" whose identity is then later revealed in 21:9-22:9.

The Bride of the Lamb is the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven. When God will have rejected and destroyed the whore Babylon, the name of a city which has caused worldwide corruption, then the stage will be cleared for the coming down of the New Jerusalem which is the name of the city of God which causes worldwide conversion of all nations towards God.

Let us now have a look at the end of the two sections 17:1-19:10 and 21:9-22:9:

19:10

10 Then

I fell down at his feet to worship him,

but he said to me, "You must not do that!

I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Worship God."

For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

22:8-9

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things.

And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, 9 but he said to me, "You must not do that!

I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book.

Worship God."

It is quite evident that these closing texts of our two sections resemble each other closely. They are structural markers showing us the end of 17:1-19:10 and 21:9-22:9. These two sections then contain the section 19:11-21:8 in the middle of them as the sixth of seven vision cycles which stretch from 4:1 to 22:9.

In this sixth vision cycle the enemies of God are dealt with by being "thrown", ultimately into the lake of fire (Rv 19:20; 20:3.10.14.15). Having done away with his enemies (19:11-20:15) God then makes all things new (21:1-8).

The fact that the New Jerusalem is presented in the seventh vision cycle as the "Bride, the wife of the Lamb... coming down out of heaven from God" to stay forever is most fitting. Again the number seven is the number of fullness and completion. The ways of God are perfect. His plans have been fulfilled. God's dwelling is with man forever.

We now can present an outline of Revelation:¹⁹⁰

190. This outline is similar to the one found in Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Revelation*, BST (Inter Varsity Press, 2000), p. 15-18.

1. Prologue 1:1-8

2. Main Part 1:9-22:9

(a) Seven Letters about Today 1:9 - 3:22

- i. 1:9-20 A vision of Christ introduces the seven letters. "Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are..." (1:19; 1:10).
- ii. 2:1-3:22 The seven letters
 - A. To the angel of the church in Ephesus write... 2:1-7
 - B. And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write... 2:8-11
 - C. And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write... 2:12-17
 - D. And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write... 2:18-29
 - E. And to the angel of the church in Sardis write... 3:1-6
 - F. And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write... 3:7-13
 - G. And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write... 3:14-22

(b) Seven Vision Cycles about the Future 4:1 - 22:9 "Write therefore ... those that are to take place after this" (1:19; 4:1-2).

- i. The Scroll with the Seven Seals 4:1 - 8:1
- ii. The Seven Trumpets 8:2 - 11:19
- iii. The Woman, the Beasts, the Lamb and Judgment 12 -14
- iv. The Seven Bowls 15 - 16
- v. The Whore Babylon 17:1 - 19:10
- vi. The Enemies of God pass away, the New comes. 19:11- 21:8
- vii. The Bride of the Lamb 21:9 - 22:9

3. Epilogue 22:10-21

17.7.4 7 seals, trumpets and bowls

The three vision cycles of the 7 seals, 7 trumpets and 7 bowls can be compared in a table:

	7 Seals	7 Trumpets	7 Bowls poured out on
1.	White Horse: Conqueror	1/3 of the earth is burnt.	the Earth: sores.
2.	Fiery Red Horse: War	1/3 of sea becomes blood.	the Sea: all blood, all dead.
3.	Black Horse: Inflation	1/3 of the waters are poisoned.	the Rivers + springs of water: blood.
4.	Pale Horse: Death / Hades, 1/4 judgment	1/3 of the light becomes dark.	the Sun: heat, no repentance.
5.	Martyrs	1st woe: The abyss is opened. Pain.	the beast's throne: no repentance, dark, pain.
6.	Day of the Lord	2nd woe: 4 Euphrates angels are freed. No repentance. 1/3 of mankind killed.	the Euphrates: Preparation for the Day of God.
	The 144000 Sealed and the uncountable crowd.	Seven thunders, two witnesses.	Waiting for Jesus
7.	1/2 Hour of Silence	3rd woe: Day of judgment.	the Air: It is done.

One specialty of the sixth item is that there is a kind of attachment to it showing the state of the people of God: Attached to the sixth seal is 7:1-17, to the sixth trumpet 10:1-11:13, to the sixth bowl 16:15.

The seven seals and the seven trumpets can be divided into four and three. The four first seals present four riders on four horses, so they belong together. This sets the other three seals aside. The last three trumpets belong together because they are called "the three woes". This sets the four first trumpets aside.

The seven trumpets and the seven bowls can be compared with regard to the areas which are affected: The first hit the earth, the second the sea, the third the drinking water, the fourth the light source, the fifth cause darkness and pain, the sixth are related to the Euphrates and the seventh bring completion in judgment. The difference is that judgment of the trumpets is often related to one third of the affected "area" and the judgment of the bowls hits the whole.

17.7.5 Chronological or repetitive?

One important question about the book of Revelation is: Should Rv 4-22 be understood as a sequence of events or a recapitulation of events? Many readers nowadays read it chronologically. What is written first, will be fulfilled first. What is written later, will be fulfilled later. They identify the sequence of the revelation of the visions with their future fulfillment. The

recapitulation theory is an alternative to this understanding and is already found in the old commentary on Revelation by Victorinus of Pettau who died in the Diocletianic persecution 303-305 C.E.¹⁹¹

Following Victorinus it is possible to show several things repeated in Rv 4-22 where it is not probable that the events are supposed to happen twice or thrice etc.:

1. The heavens disappear (6:14 sixth seal; 20:11 before the great white throne).
2. Mountains and islands move away (6:14 sixth seal; 16:20 seventh bowl).
3. The dead are judged (11:18 seventh trumpet; 20:12 judgment before the great white throne).
4. Babylon is fallen through God's judgment (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2.10.21).

In all these cases it is evident that the same thing is meant. So there is some proven kind of repetition in Rv 4-22.

Of course, it is possible that we have to combine the idea of progress with the idea of some recapitulation. The seals for example contain the idea of a judgment which affects a fourth of the earth (6:8), while the trumpets repeatedly signal that a third of something is destroyed (8:7-12; 9:15). The bowls poured out mean more complete destruction (16:3-4). There is clearly also a kind of progress in the sequence of these three vision cycles.

Perhaps we can say that they do not start at the same time, but they lead to the same end. The seven seals can be read quite parallel to the Olivet discourse of Jesus in Mt 24 which speaks in favor of the assumption that both chapters cover the whole time between the first and the second coming of Jesus Christ. Perhaps the trumpets blow later in history and the bowls present the climax of the end of the end times. But all three series of seven

191. In his comments to Rv 7 Victorinus points out that he is in favor of understanding Revelation as having been inspired with repetitions rather than in a chronological way. Schaff, ANF07. *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries*: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily, and Liturgies, p. 524-525

seem to end with the day of the Lord which includes the visible coming of Christ into power (6:17 and 8:1; 11:15-19; 16:15-21).

17.7.6 Views on the Millennium

Within the Bible there is only one text which speaks of a thousand year reign (millennium)¹⁹² and that is Revelation 20:1-10. Within church history three main views have developed to understand this notoriously difficult section: premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism.

Premillennialists believe in the coming of Christ before (pre) the thousand year reign. Postmillennialists see Jesus coming after (post) the thousand years. The name amillennialists seems to imply that these people do not believe in a thousand year reign because the prefix "a-" points to the negation of something. But this name is not quite correct because they believe in the millennium and identify it with the time of the church until the second coming of Christ.

Premillennialism

According to premillennialism the second coming of Christ comes first, then the millennium and then the eternal state. It is possible to distinguish within premillennialism between the "historic premillennialism" and the modern "dispensational premillennialism" or "pretribulational premillennialism". The "historic premillennialism" had supporters throughout church history.¹⁹³

The "dispensational premillennialism" came up with John Nelson Darby and the Brethren movement (see dispensationalism). The new idea in "dispensational premillennialism" or "pretribulational premillennialism" was that the church would be taken up into heaven through the rapture before the "great tribulation" and that then a special time for Israel would start with a great tribulation, God's special protection and salvation of Israel through this difficult time and then a millennium for Israel as a climax.

192. "Millennium" comes from the Latin for a "thousand years".

193. A modern supporter is Grudem. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 1127.

One of the oldest witnesses for historic premillennialism in history is Papias writing in his five books "Interpretations of the Sayings of the Lord"¹⁹⁴ as reported by Eusebius. Latter says in his Church History (III,39,12-13) about Papias:¹⁹⁵

12. To these belong his statement that there will be a period of some thousand years after the resurrection of the dead, and that the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this very earth.¹⁹⁶ I suppose he got these ideas through a misunderstanding of the apostolic accounts, not perceiving that the things said by them were spoken mystically in figures.
13. For he appears to have been of very limited understanding, as one can see from his discourses.

According to Eusebius Papias was of the opinion that the kingdom of Christ will be "after the resurrection ... on this very earth" and for "a period of some thousand years". It is clear that Eusebius does not favor the premillennialism of Papias deeming him of "very limited understanding", but still we have to be grateful that Eusebius reports the words of Papias about this subject because his books have been lost and are only available through the quotes of others.

Since Papias, premillennialism has been promoted throughout church history with e.g. the following arguments. The first is that this seems to be the straightforward reading of Rv 20:1-10 within the context of Revelation. At the end of Rv 19 the beast and the false prophet are captured in war and "thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur" (19:20).

In 20:1-3 Satan is seized, chained¹⁹⁷ and thrown into the bottomless pit, which is shut with a key and sealed for a thousand years.

194. Λογίων Κυριακῶν ἐξηγήσεις According to Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, §10a this work was written between 120 and 160 C.E.

195. Schaff, NPNF2-01. Eusebius Pamphilus: *Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine*, p. 252.

196. ἐν οἷς καὶ χιλιάδα τινὰ φησιν ἐτῶν ἔσεσθαι μετὰ τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀνάστασιν, σωματικῶς τῆς Χριστοῦ βασιλείας ἐπὶ ταυτησί τῆς γῆς ὑποστησομένης. Eusebius, *Kirchengeschichte Eusebius' ecclesiastical history*, Schwartz, E. <ed> (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1908), 442 pp, p. 121.

197. καὶ ἔδησεν αὐτὸν χίλια ἔτη

After the thousand years Satan is "released from his prison" and deceives the nations to organize an attack on the "beloved city", probably Jerusalem. The attackers are consumed by fire and the devil is thrown into the lake of fire to join the other two, the beast and the false prophet, who had already been there for a thousand years. After this the three of them will be tormented for their sins in the lake of fire for ever and ever (20:7-10).

It is acknowledged that the millennium as a period of a thousand years is only mentioned in Rv 20:1-10 within the Bible but at the same time there are also texts in the Old Testament which seem to imply an intermediate kingdom of God between the second coming of Christ and the eternal state (Is 65:20; 11:6-11; Ps 72; Zec 14:5-17).¹⁹⁸

Among the New Testament passages quoted in favor of premillennialism are the promise for the believers to rule the nations with a rod of iron in Rv 2:26-27¹⁹⁹, Paul's sequence of three resurrections in 1 Cor 15:23-25 (first Christ, then those who belong to Christ, then the end).

Postmillennialism

According to postmillennialism the millennium comes first, then the second coming of Christ and then the eternal state.²⁰⁰ One key idea of postmillennialism is that the Great Commission in Mt 28:18-20 is not only a commandment but will be put into action by the church through the power of the Holy Spirit until the second coming of Christ. The kingdom of God is compared to the mustard seed starting small and growing big and to the leaven working slowly but surely and finally affecting everything (Mt 13:31-33).²⁰¹ Christ sits at the right hand of God until all his enemies are put under his feet (1 Cor 15:20-26.57-58).

198. Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 1127-1129.

199. Cf. Ps 2:9; Rv 12:5-6; 19:15.

200. According to Greg L. Bahnsen, "The Prima Facie Acceptability of Postmillennialism," [accessed February 22, 2013], 1977, <http://www.cmfnow.com/articles/pt031.htm> John Calvin could possibly be viewed as a postmillennialist, as well as Martin Bucer and Theodore Beza and other later theologians of reformed theology such as Jonathan Edwards, B. B. Warfield and A. Hodge.

201. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 1122.

Amillennialism

According to amillennialism²⁰² the millennium has already started with the first coming of Christ, his death and resurrection, his ascension to heaven and his sitting at the right hand of God the Father. The number 1000 is not understood in a literal sense, but in a symbolical sense of a long period of time.²⁰³

The second coming of Christ is the closure of the millennium and ushers in the eternal state. The passing away of the old heavens and earth, the coming of the new heavens and earth, judgment day, and the resurrection of the good and of the wicked all happen at the same time. The binding of Satan in Rv 20:1-3 is understood in the sense of the words of Jesus in Mt 12:28-29:

28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.²⁰⁴

There are other passages in the New Testament which proclaim a great defeat of Satan related to the first coming of Christ, his death, resurrection and ascension (Lk 10:18; Jn 12:23-24.31-33; Col 2:14-15; Heb 2:14; Rv 12:5-11).

The first resurrection of Rv 20:4-6 is understood to be the martyrs who reign with Christ during the time of the church:

4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the

202. One early and influential supporter of amillennialism was Augustine of Hippo 354-430. Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, §33g. For Augustine's exposition on the subject see *City of God*, book XX, chapter 7-14, Schaff, NPNF1-02. St. Augustin's *City of God and Christian Doctrine*, p. 608-620.

203. The same symbolic understanding of the number 1000 is true for many postmillennialists and some premillennialists as well.

204. Mt 12:29 ἢ πῶς δύναται τις εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν τοῦ ἰσχυροῦ καὶ τὰ σκεύη αὐτοῦ ἀρπάσαι, ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτον δῇσῃ τὸν ἰσχυρόν; καὶ τότε τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ διαρπάσει.

souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.²⁰⁵ 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

Here the first resurrection is understood as a spiritual resurrection and not a bodily one. The time of the resurrection of the body is understood to be the same for the good and for the wicked on the day of judgment (Jn 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Dn 12:2).

The main ideas of Rv 20:1-10

It is possible to perceive the main ideas of Rv 20:1-10 and appreciate them in the context of Rv 19:11-21:8. We have seen that the main idea of this sixth vision cycle is "The Enemies of God pass away, the New comes." (see subsection 17.7.3) and the enemies of God are dealt with by being "thrown", ultimately into the lake of fire (Rv 19:20; 20:3.10.14.15). Having done away with his enemies (19:11-20:15) God then makes all things new (21:1-8).

The development of thought within 20:1-10 progresses in three steps:

1. 20:1-3 Satan is bound for a thousand years like a dangerous criminal in a high security prison.
2. 20:4-6 Those who preferred death to the sin of worshiping the beast who is the accomplice of Satan, are rewarded with eternal life as priests of God and Christ, ruling as kings for the thousand years while Satan is in prison.

205. καὶ ἔζησαν καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν μετὰ τοῦ χριστοῦ χίλια ἔτη.

3. 20:7-10 After a thousand years the criminal Satan is released, but he has not used the time in prison to change and repent. He continues in his sinful rebellion against God, deceives the nations again and is punished by being thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented for ever and ever.

So far this text can be understood and appreciated and is also quite clear.

Waiting for answers

But there are also questions which are difficult to answer at this time. For example who is Gog and Magog and "the nations that are at the four corners of the earth"?²⁰⁶ At what time are they at the four corners of the earth? At the time of writing? At the end of the thousand years? Where do these nations come from at the time of the attack? From the four corners of the earth? Or together with Satan out of the abyss? Are the thousand years literally a thousand years or is this a symbolical number and points to a long time? When do the thousand years start?

Regarding prophecy we can say that the best interpretation of prophecy is its fulfillment. Sometimes people of one age were told to write their book and go to rest, so that people of a later age may understand the prophecy (see e.g. Dn 12:4.8.9). We can argue, we can try to explain, but we should not separate over the issue of the right exposition of Rv 20:1-10.²⁰⁷ What faith can understand today, one should grasp and cling to. Faith does not fight love, but strengthens it.

206. 20:8 καὶ ἐξελεύσεται πλανῆσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὰ ἐν ταῖς τέσσαροι γωνίαις τῆς γῆς, τὸν Γῶγ καὶ Μαγῶγ, συναγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν πόλεμον, ὃν ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτῶν ὡς ἡ ἄμμος τῆς θαλάσσης.

207. A very interesting book and recommended for further reading is J. Webb Mealy, *After the Thousand Years. Resurrection and Judgment in Revelation 20*, JSNT 70 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992).

Chapter 18

Hope for the Future

18.1 Life after Death

The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments teach that the human personality does not cease to exist after the physical death of the body, but that the soul or the spirit of the dead leave the body and still have a conscious existence and wait for the day of the resurrection of the body.

18.1.1 In the Old Testament

A hint about a future life after death is the way the Pentateuch speaks of the death of the great men of faith. They are gathered to their fathers or ancestors: Abraham (Gn 25:7-9); Isaac (Gn 35:28-29); Jacob (Gn 49:29-50:14; Aaron (Nm 20:24-26; Moses (Nm 27:13; Dt 32:50).¹

The best way to understand this seems to be a kind of family reunion.²

In this context a special section in Isaiah is of interest where the same Hebrew for the "gathering" is used for going from this life to the next state. Their state after death is described as "peace" and "rest" (Is 57:1-2):

1. See also Jgs 2:10; 2 Kgs 22:20; 2 Chr 34:28; Ps 27:10; Is 24:21-23.

2. Compare Philip S. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol. Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2002), p. 34: "More likely, 'gathered to his peoples' indicates joining one's ancestors in the afterlife."

1 The righteous man perishes,
 and no one lays it to heart;
 devout men are taken away,³
 while no one understands.
 For the righteous man is taken away from calamity;
 2 he enters into peace;
 they rest in their beds who walk in their uprightness.

The orders Joseph gave for his funeral and what should happen when Israel moved to the promised land show not only his faith that God would fulfill his promises, but also that Joseph wanted to have a personal share in it (Gn 50:24-26).

In 1 Kgs 17:21 Elijah asks for the life or soul⁴ of the son of the widow to return into the child. This can be understood in a way that the soul had left the body and should return into it.

In the OT it was strictly forbidden to contact the spirits of the dead (Dt 18:11), but it was still practiced throughout the OT (1 Sm 28:7-19; Is 8:19). It was a sin, it was wrong, but still it testifies to the belief of the Israelites that there was a life or an existence after death and even that those spirits would know things which the living do not know. The way the story is written in 1 Sm 28:7-19 seems to indicate that it was really the deceased prophet Samuel who was delivering the judgment speech to the apostate Saul and soon everything he said was fulfilled.

Some Psalms reflect on the life after death. In Ps 73 this is the key answer to the temptation of Asaph seeing that the temporal life of the wicked is healthy and good: They are rejected in death (73:17-20) yet he (Asaph) is accepted into God's presence in glory (Ps 73:23-26). Ps 49:15 contains a very similar idea.

18.1.2 In the New Testament

Jesus teaches that people who believe in him, do not really die, even if they die according to the body (Jn 11:25-26). Therefore they should not fear men

3. וְאִישׁ־חַסֵּד נֶאֱסָפִים.

4. תִּשָּׁב נָא נַפְשׁ־הַיָּלֵד הַזֶּה עַל־קִרְבּוֹ.

who only can kill the body but not the soul, but they should fear only God (Mt 10:28). Poor Lazarus in the great story about the change after death is comforted in Abraham's bosom, while the rich and heartless man is in great pain (Lk 16:24-25).

One of the two criminals who were crucified with Christ came to faith in Jesus Christ as the coming king and asked Jesus to remember him when He came into power. The answer of Jesus was a promise of Paradise (Lk 23:43):

Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.

This shows us that the spirit of Christ went to Paradise after his death and that the converted criminal's spirit would join Jesus there on that same day. What grace!

In the same way Paul knew that his death would bring him to Christ (Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:1-10, esp. 6-8) who is in the heavenly new Jerusalem and gathers all the spirits of the deceased believers into his city (Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22-24; Heb 11:10.16; Rv 3:12; 6:9-11; 21:2).

A good biblical definition of the death of the body can be found in Jas 2:26: As creation in Gn 2:7 was the uniting of body from the earth with the breath of life given from God's Spirit, so death is the separation of the spirit of man from his body.

The angels are called spirits "sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation" (Heb 1:14). So it is interesting that Jesus mentioned that Lazarus "was carried by the angels to Abraham's side" after his death (Lk 16:22).

It seems that the coming of Christ brought big changes into the invisible world, especially his death and his resurrection (Heb 2:14-16):

14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

There are other verses which show that the death and the resurrection of

Christ were powerful in bringing real change to the spiritual world (Jn 12:31-32; Col 2:14-15; Rv 1:17-18; Eph 4:8-10; 1 Cor 15:45).

18.2 **Resurrection**

18.2.1 **In the Old Testament**

In the song of Moses, God is presented as the one and only true God, without any competition. One of his qualities is that he can make alive from death (Dt 32:39):

See now that I, even I, am he,
and there is no god beside me;
I kill and I make alive;
I wound and I heal;
and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.

Hannah's faith was very similar (1 Sm 2:6). At the end of the famous Ps 22 all nations come and worship the true God. Even those who had died, come and eat and worship God (Ps 22:29). See also Is 25:6-8; 26:14.19; Hos 6:1-2; 13:14 looking at the LXX and Paul's use of the verse in 1 Cor 15:55; Ez 37:1-14.

Dn 12:2-3 presents the idea of a double resurrection of the dead either for eternal life or for eternal shame:

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

18.2.2 **In the New Testament**

An important part of the teaching of the New Testament about resurrection has already been discussed in "Christ's Resurrection and its Importance" in section 10.4.

The teaching of Jesus about the future resurrection.

In John 5:28-29 Jesus teaches a "resurrection of life" and a "resurrection of judgment". As in Dn 12:3 the resurrection of the righteous will be glorious (Mt 13:43; Lk 11:36). There will be a reward "at the resurrection of the just" (Lk 14:14).

The time of the resurrection is on the last day when also the judgment will happen. When Jesus tells Martha, that Lazarus will rise again, she answers that "he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day" (Jn 11:23-24). Martha probably reflects here on some former teaching of Jesus (cf. Jn 6:39.40.44.54). The judgment is also on this last day (Jn 12:48).

On the day of judgment some Gentile believers will "rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it", namely the men of Niniveh (Mt 12:41; Lk 11:32) and the queen of the South (Mt 12:42; Lk 11:31).

Some wrong teachings about the resurrection and their refutation.

To understand the teaching of Jesus and the apostles about the resurrection better, let us look at some wrong ideas about this subject which are pointed out in the New Testament. Then we can see how they are refuted.

There is no resurrection.

The party of the Sadducees denied the idea of a resurrection (Mt 22:23.28; Mk 12:18.23; Lk 20:27.33; Acts 4:2; Acts 23:6.8; Acts 24:21; cf. also Acts 26:8).

Jesus, asked about the resurrection by the Sadducees, used Ex 3:6 to prove the idea of resurrection as implied in the law of Moses. God calls himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob hundreds of years after their deaths. God is not a God of the dead, but of the living (Mt 22:31-32; Mk 12:26-27; Lk 20:37-38). "For all live to him" (Lk 20:38). This last phrase only reported by Luke may imply that God and his invisible world is not subject to time. Even if Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would be resurrected later in history, "they live for God", because for God there is not time restriction and he may see the future from afar as presence.

There is no married life for those who join in the resurrection of life and there is no death for them. They are like angels (Mt 22:30; Mk 12:25; Lk 20:35-36).

In Corinth there were some people, probably influenced by Greek philosophy, who denied the idea of a resurrection. Paul has to argue against this. Paul commits a whole chapter to the purpose of showing that the resurrection is essential for salvation and the Christian faith (1 Cor 15).

He first gives proof of the resurrection of Christ as an essential part of the Gospel (15:1-11). Then he explains that our faith without the real resurrection of Christ is ineffective and damaging, one big lie (1 Cor 15:12-19).

He moves on and insists that the fact of the resurrection of Christ totally changes the course of history and will bring all powers in heaven and on earth under the feet of Christ. The last enemy to be defeated will be death at the time of the second coming of Christ (15:20-28; see 15:54-57).

In 15:29-34 Paul seems to talk about certain local circumstances in Corinth and admonishes them to get sober and stop sinning.

In 15:35-49 Paul answers the question "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" (15:35). The old body is like a seed sown into the ground being buried, the resurrection is what comes out of the seed, but is different (15:42-44):

So is it with the resurrection of the dead.

What is sown is perishable;
what is raised is imperishable.

43 It is sown in dishonor;
it is raised in glory.

It is sown in weakness;
it is raised in power.

44 It is sown a natural body;
it is raised a spiritual body.

The key to all this is Christ. The risen Christ is the "firstfruits" (15:23). He is the prototype of the new mankind, as Adam was the prototype of the old

mankind (15:45-49). This means, with the risen Christ we have the first proof of the new world to come.

The first creation started with the creation of the heavens and the earth and ended with the creation of man, especially his in-breathing of the spirit of life (Gn 2:7; 1 Cor 15:45). The new creation starts with the last part of the old creation, with a new man, with the risen Christ, who is also God and imparts spiritual life to others, making their spirits alive, breathing into them His Spirit (1 Cor 15:45; John 20:22).

In his last part Paul shares a mystery with the Corinthians (1 Cor 15:50-58): There will be one generation of believers which does not have to die, but who will be transformed at the time of the last trumpet (see Is 27:13; Mt 24:31; 1 Thes 4:16; Rv 11:15.18; 2 Cor 5:4.)

Jesus is a risen prophet or John the Baptist. While Jesus was preaching and healing, there were people who thought him to be a resurrected prophet (Lk 9:19; Mk 6:15; Lk 9:8); especially John the Baptist (Mt 14:2; Mk 6:14.16; Lk 9:7.9). Within the gospels this is only a prelude to the confession of Peter and the disciples that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16; cf. Mk 8:29; Lk 9:20).

The resurrection has already happened. This idea of Hymenaeus and Philetus is rejected by Paul as damaging the faith (2 Tm 2:18). Probably their ideas belonged to gnostic teachings in which the material body was rejected or despised and consequently the idea of a resurrection spiritualized and anticipated (cf. 1 Tm 4:1-5; 6:20-21).

Confession of the resurrection of the beast. According to Rv 13:3.14 the beast seems to imitate the suffering and the resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. Rv 5:6) and is consequently seen as divine and worshiped by the whole earth, by "everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain" (Rv 13:8).

Some more apostolic teaching about the future resurrection.

The teaching about the resurrection belongs to the fundamental teachings of Christianity (Heb 6:2). The better resurrection is the resurrection to live forever. Some people who have been raised from death, later had to die again (Heb 11:35). This is true for the resurrections during the time of the Old Testament and also for some resurrections performed at the time of Jesus.

Paul confesses his faith before Felix at Caesarea that "there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15). The first resurrection in Rv 20:4-6 is a resurrection of the martyrs to rule with Christ for thousand years and be priests of God and Christ at the same time.

18.3 Judgment

18.3.1 The Time of Judgment

We have already talked about God's judgment in several places before. We have seen that the day of judgment is the last day or the day of the Lord: the day of judgment⁵ (Mt 10:15; 11:22.24; 12:36; 2 Pt 2:9; 3:7; 1 John 4:17) the day when God judges⁶ (Rom 2:16) the judgment of the great day⁷ (Jude 1:6)

According to the six uses of 'the last day' in John⁸ (John 6:39.40.44.54; 11:24; 12:48) two things happen on that day: The resurrection of the believers to life and the judgment of the unfaithful who have rejected the word of Jesus (compare John 5:28-29).

The judgment will happen on that day so that some are saved and rewarded and others are condemned and punished (Mt 7:22; 10:15; 11:22.24; 12:36; Lk 10:12; 17:24-37; John 12:48; Acts 2:21; Rom 2:5-10.16; 1 Cor

5. In Greek ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως or εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων or ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως

6. In Greek ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὅτε κρίνει ὁ θεός

7. In Greek εἰς κρίσιν μεγάλης ἡμέρας

8. In Greek τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ or ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ

1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:10; 2:16; 1 Thes 5:3; 2 Thes 2:8; 2 Tm 1:18; 4:8; 2 Pt 2:9; 3:7; 1 John 4:17; Jude 1:6).

18.3.2 **The Way of Judgment**

Throughout the Bible the idea is that God judges men "according to their works"⁹ and pays them back (Ps 28:4; Jer 32:19; 50:29; Prv 24:12; Lam 3:64; Rom 2:6; Rom 2:7; 2 Cor 11:15; 2 Tm 4:14; 1 Pt 1:17; Jude 1:15; Rv 2:23; 18:6; 20:12; 20:13).

Even in Mt 25:31-46 the idea is that all of mankind is as different as sheep and goats. They are recognized by their behavior or by their fruits (Mt 7:16). They good fruits (works) do not make the tree good, but the good tree produces the good fruits. The judgment will be easy, because it will be obvious. Their deeds and their words (Mt 12:36-37) will show what kind of person each one is.

18.3.3 **The Result of Judgment**

There will be a divided and separated mankind. The wicked will suffer for ever, the redeemed will live for ever (Mt 25:46). See the following sections.

18.4 **Hell and Eternal Suffering**

To understand the concept of "hell" better we have to look at a few words which are related to the underworld and to the future place of punishment.

18.4.1 **ὁ ᾗδης Hades**

In the Old Testament

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word Sheol is translated in the LXX with Hades. Both words are used for the realm of the dead (Ps 49:14; Is 14:9). In Ez 31:15-18 it is called a 'world' or a 'country' below.

9. κατὰ τὰ ἔργα

Jacob thinks that he will join his dead son Joseph in Sheol or Hades (Gn 37:35). It was a very special punishment that the group around Korah went down alive to Hades (Nm 16:30.33). Some Israelites at the time of Isaiah thought themselves to be in a covenant with Sheol (Is 28:15; 57:9).

Dt 32:22 speaks of a fire kindled by God's anger that burns to the depths of Sheol. The Lord can lead down to Hades and up again (1 Sm 2:6) and redeem from there (Hos 13:14).

In the New Testament

Because Capernaum had not repented, it would not be exalted to heaven, but brought down to Hades (Mt 11:23; Lk 10:15). In the spiritual war between the church of Christ and Hades the "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). The rich man suffered great pain in Hades while he could see Lazarus being with Abraham (Lk 16:23). He could not leave this place of pain, and nobody could come to ease his pain (Lk 16:26).

Fulfilling Ps 16:10, Jesus was not left in Hades and did not see corruption, but rose from the dead on the third day (Acts 2:27.31). He has "the keys of Death and Hades" (Rv 1:18. "Death and Hades" are a pair mentioned often in Revelation, to be finally thrown into the lake of fire (Rv 6:8; Rv 20:13; Rv 20:14).

Looking at all these verses, Hades can be a place of pain as it is in Lk 16:23, but it is not the final place of punishment. Hades itself is thrown into this final place according to Rv 20:14.

18.4.2 ἡ ἄβυσσος abyssōs Abyss

The abyss is the place where the demons do not want to go (Lk 8:31), perhaps of fear to be tormented before the time (Mt 8:29).

In Rom 10:7 it is the place of the dead. In Rv 9:1, 9:2 and 9:11 the abyss is mentioned in connection with the fifth trumpet. The beast coming out of the abyss will kill God's two witness of Rv 11 (Rv 11:7; 17:8). The abyss is also the place where Satan is bound for a thousand years (Rv 20:1.3).

The abyss seems to be a place of pain for the demons, because they do not want to go there. As far as the abyss is also a place for dead people, it

seems to overlap with Hades or Sheol. In most of the places in the NT it is related to demons, or Satan or the angel of the bottomless pit.

18.4.3 ἡ γέεννα gēenna Gehenna

The word gēenna is the Greek form of the Hebrew גֵּהֶנְנוֹ for "Valley of Hinnom" (Jo 15:8; 18:16; Neh 11:30) or בֶּן־הִנּוֹם for "the Valley of the Son of Hinnom" (Jo 15:8; 18:16; 2 Chr 28:3; Jer 7:32; 2 Kgs 23:10), a valley south of Jerusalem.¹⁰

Gehenna or "hell" is a word for the place of the future eternal punishment of the wicked. It is the "Gehenna" (Mt 5:29; 5:30; 10:28; Lk 12:5; Mt 23:15; 23:33; Mk 9:45) or the "Gehenna of fire" (Mt 5:22; 18:9).

This fire of hell is "unquenchable" Mk 9:43. Jesus warns people not to sin with the following drastic words (Mk 9:47-48):

47 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 48 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'

The worm which does not die and the everlasting fire point to the everlasting punishment and torture of the wicked in hell. The words are taken from Is 66:24.

When James wants to warn the believers to be careful how they use their tongue, he speaks of the wicked use of one's tongue as a fire coming from hell (Jas 3:6).

18.4.4 ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός The Lake of Fire.

There is a special lake¹¹ of fire mentioned in Revelation which seems to be the equivalent of the phrase "Gehenna of fire" which we have looked at before. The beast and the false prophet were thrown alive into the

10. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 303-304.

11. The word for lake is also used in other places in the NT for a normal lake of water (Lk 5:1; Lk 5:2; Lk 8:22; Lk 8:23; Lk 8:33).

lake of fire that burns with sulfur (Rv 19:20). In Rv 20:10 they are joined by "the devil who ... was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

Rv 20:14-15 reveals that this will be the final place for many:

14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Rv 21:8 gives a list of people who are to be found there:

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

18.4.5 **Eternal Suffering or Eternal Punishment**

We have already seen in the discussion of the words for the final place of punishment (Gehenna and lake of fire) that there will be an ongoing punishment of the wicked for ever and ever. The fire tormenting them will not be quenched. The worm biting them will not die. They burn without being annihilated (Rv 19:20; 20:20).

The same words are used for eternal life and eternal punishment (Mt 25:46).

Sometimes people speculate about a future end of aeons taking 1 Cor 10:11 as a proof text:

Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.¹²

12. εἰς οὗς τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων κατήντηκεν.

What does Paul mean with "the end of the ages"? He does not speak here about the future end of the ages after the second coming of Christ and after some "eternities", but he thinks of the end of this time of the world which happens at the second coming of Christ. 1 Cor 10:11 can not be understood as a proof that there will be an end of the aeons or ages of the New Heavens and the New Earth.

The phrase which is used quite often for the future unfolding "eternity" is "forever and ever", for example Rv 11:15:

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.¹³

The idea is that the kingdom of Christ will be without end (Is 9:6-7; Dn 7:13-14). The same phrase is used for God who will live for ever and ever (Rv 10:6). The very same phrase is used in Rv 20:10 telling us that the devil and the beast and the false prophet "will be tormented day and night forever and ever".

The punishment of the wicked is eternal in the sense of being without end. The theory of "Universalism" is unbiblical which teaches that all sinners will be saved in the end because God's will in 1 Tm 2:4 will triumph over the sinful will of men.

The time to repent is now in this life time. We believe with Peter (2 Pt 3:9) that there will be no chance of repentance after the coming of the day of the Lord.

18.5 New Heavens, New Earth, New Jerusalem

18.5.1 In the Old Testament

There are some Old Testament predictions that the old heavens and the old earth would pass away (Ps 102:25-27; Is 24:19-20; 34:4; 51:6) and that God would create new heavens and a new earth and on it a new Jerusalem as a place of eternal joy (Is 51:16; 65:17-18; 66:13,22; see also Is 49:14ff; 54:1-17; 60; 62).

13. βασιλεύσει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

18.5.2 In the New Testament

The apostle Paul calls the heavenly Jerusalem our mother (Gal 4:26 and speaks of "our citizenship ... in heaven"¹⁴ (Phil 3:20). According to Hebrews 11:10,16) Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were already looking forward to the city built by God. This city is the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22-24):

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

The "spirits of the righteous made perfect" are already gathered there (including the martyrs, see Rv 6:9-11). We learn from Mt 25:34 that the kingdom was already prepared for them from the foundation of the world.¹⁵ According to Heb 11:16 God already had a city prepared for the patriarchs when he called himself "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Ex 3:6).

Peter writes in his second letter about the great change after the passing away of the old heavens and the old earth (2 Pt 3:13):

But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Peter puts greater emphasis on the passing of the old because of the scoffers denying any future change or judgment. But still the one thing which makes a great difference is the righteousness dwelling in the new future creation.

In Rv 21:1-5 we see a vision of everything made new.

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned

14. ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει

15. κληρονομήσατε τὴν ἡτοιμασμένην ὑμῖν βασιλείαν ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.

for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

The New Jerusalem of Revelation seems to be identical with Paradise. Because the tree of life is in Paradise (Rv 2:7; cf. Gn 2:9; 3:22) and also in the New Jerusalem (Rv 22:2). Consequently we can assume in 2 Cor 12:2-4 that the New Jerusalem and Paradise are in the third heaven.

The cubic form of the New Jerusalem (Rv 21:16) and the alternate name "the dwelling place of God with man"¹⁶ (Rv 21:3) link this city with the other dwelling places of God amongst men: the tabernacle (Ex 25:8; 26:1 and the temple (1 Kgs 6:20).

The fact that the most holy place had cubic form in the temple and the same form is chosen for the New Jerusalem only with bigger measures conveys an enormous truth: The city needs no temple to meet God there, because God himself is at home in the whole city (Rv 21:22). In tabernacle and temple God was separated from the normal people, in the New Jerusalem God and all his people meet freely and see each other directly (Rv 22:4).

Bauer reckons one stadion¹⁷ equals 192 meters. We calculate there are 2304 kms for the 12,000 stadia in Rv 21:16. This means the city is 2304 kms long, 2304 kms wide and 2304 kms high, if we understand this literally. The same John who received the Revelation, informs us in the Gospel that Jesus said: "In my Father's house are many rooms" (Jn 14:2).

That "the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel" are inscribed on the twelve gates and that the "names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb"

16. ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων

17. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, p. 1513.

are on the twelve foundations of the city wall (21:14) shows us the truth here that all believers from Israel and from all nations from all times are one kingdom of God and one people (Cf. Jn 10:16; Eph 2:19-22; Mt 8:11).

The New Jerusalem is the bride of the Lamb and comes down from heaven to earth (21:9-11; 19:7). This is an indication that at the time of the consummation of all things the great distance and differences between heaven and earth have ceased to exist. In Eccl 5:2 we read that "God is in heaven and you are on earth". But then the heavens have come down on earth in the form of the heavenly city and God dwells with men. The Paradise of Gen 2 has not only been restored but is much bigger and more glorious. Eternal joy rules mankind in the presence of God and the Lamb.

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