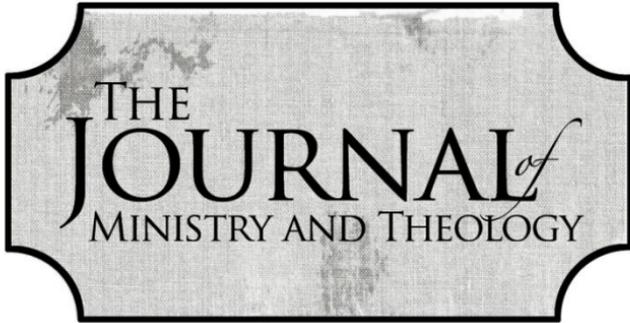


Spring 2010 | Volume 14 | Number 1



Baptist Bible Seminary
Clarks Summit | Pennsylvania

The Journal of Ministry and Theology
*Published semiannually by Baptist Bible Seminary,
Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania*

Jim Jeffery
President

Mike Stallard
Dean of Baptist Bible Seminary

Gary Gromacki/Mike Stallard
Editors

Teresa Ingalls/Joy McGinniss
Editorial Assistants

The Journal of Ministry and Theology is a semiannual journal published by Baptist Bible Seminary of Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania. It is devoted to the growth of pastors and educators through interaction with contemporary critical issues and methodologies from the perspective of a biblical worldview. The Journal provides a forum for faculty, students, and friends of BBS to apply theology in ministry for the benefit of local church and parachurch organizations. Regular features of The Journal include articles on biblical exegesis; pastoral, biblical, and systematic theology; ethics; church history; missions; and ministry issues.

The views represented herein are not necessarily endorsed by Baptist Bible Seminary, its administration, or its faculty.

Subscription Rates: One year \$16.00 (\$21.00 foreign); Two years \$30 (\$36.00 foreign); Single issues available at \$9.00 each. Subscription requests should be sent in care of Journal Subscription Secretary, Baptist Bible Seminary, 538 Venard Road, Clarks Summit, PA 18411. All subscriptions are payable in U.S. currency, with checks made payable to Baptist Bible Seminary.

Postal Information for The Journal of Ministry and Theology (ISSN: 1092-9525). Address changes can be sent to the Journal Subscription Secretary per the above address.

Copyright ©2010 by Baptist Bible Seminary. Requests for permission to reprint articles, in whole or in part, must be secured from the editor and from the author of the particular article. Mail requests to The Journal of Ministry and Theology Editor, Baptist Bible Seminary, 538 Venard Road, Clarks Summit, PA 18411.

Spring 2010 | Volume 14 | Number 1

The Journal of Ministry and Theology

Contents

Jesus and War	5
<i>Kenneth Gardoski, Ph.D.</i>	
The Biblical Basis for Multiethnic Churches and Ministry	55
<i>Ken Davis, M.A.</i>	
Which are the New Covenant Passages in the Old Testament?: Part One	98
<i>David Fredrickson, Ph.D.</i>	
Islamic Eschatology: Implications for Christian Witness	153
<i>Warren Larson, Ph.D.</i>	
Book Review	176

2 Timothy 2:2

*And the things that you have heard from me
among many witnesses, commit these
to faithful men who will be able
to teach others also.*

Jesus and War¹

Dr. Kenneth Gardoski
Associate Professor of Systematic Theology
Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania

INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s the “What Would Jesus Do” phenomenon took America by storm. Originally appearing in Charles Sheldon’s 1896 book *In His Steps*, the phrase (now shortened to the acronym WWJD) represented the call of a new generation to emulate Jesus in all of life. The practice of seeking Jesus’ opinion on matters far outdates the WWJD bracelet craze or even Sheldon’s famous book. Christians have been asking what Jesus would (or did) do for centuries. This is actually a good question for theology. For example, on the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, we can marshal good support to show just how high Jesus’ view of Scripture was on these important subjects. As another example, if a literal interpretation of Genesis 1–2 and the historicity of Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, and Jonah in the big fish were good enough for Jesus, they are good enough for us.

When it comes to the subject of war, scholars of all stripes likewise look to the words and deeds of Jesus to formulate and defend their position. This is not a bad thing. However, all too often when pondering Jesus and war people immediately—and sometimes exclusively—quote “blessed are the peacemakers” and “turn the other cheek.” Now don’t get me wrong; I am not denigrating these profound and challenging teachings of Jesus, although it is important we interpret them correctly in their context. But we must look wider even within the gospels to get the full picture. We must also look beyond the gospels, for they pertain to Jesus’ first coming and His behavior and teaching

¹ This article was originally written for and delivered as a Faculty Forum paper at Baptist Bible Seminary on 16 September 2009.

which its purposes required. We need to look at the whole NT where we will find more relevant passages on the subject. Finally, we even should go back to—or better yet start in—the OT to find Messianic passages that relate to the subject. All of these passages—OT, gospels, rest of the NT—are required if we want to get a complete and full-orbed view of Jesus and war in Scripture.

EXAMINATION OF PASSAGES

With that said, in the following pages I will examine a number of relevant passages in their canonical order. I will start with just a sampling of some key OT texts, move on to consider the gospels, and finish with several passages from the rest of the NT. Then I will analyze the two main Christian positions on war and how they use scriptural information about Jesus to support their views. I will conclude that while Jesus was personally non-violent during his earthly life and taught his followers a non-violent approach to personal life and to ministry, Jesus did not deny the government's authority as a divine instrument of wrath upon evildoers, nor is Jesus himself a pacifist by principle. This is proven by the warfare he waged against the devil during his earthly ministry culminating with the cross, and by the warfare he will one day wage against all his enemies as prophesied in both testaments of Scripture.

Genesis 3:15

Genesis 3:15 has long been called the *protevangelium*, the “first gospel” of Scripture. Since the second century A.D. Christian scholars have taken the seed of the woman to be a reference to Christ.² This verse continues God's curse of the serpent for his deception of Eve (v. 14). God predicted enmity between the serpent and the woman, as well as violent

² Ronald F. Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 57.

confrontation between their “seed” (v. 15a).³ God promised that while the serpent would “bruise” the seed of the woman “on the heel,” “He shall bruise you on the head.”⁴ The word translated “bruise” can also mean “crush.”⁵ The blow to the head of the serpent will be more destructive than the blow to the heel of the woman’s seed.⁶

How does this conflict play out in the immediate context of Genesis? On one view the first seed of the woman to appear is Cain and evil is personified as crouching at Cain’s door and desiring to overtake him (Gen 4:7).⁷ On another view the conflict between Cain and Abel represents the conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman respectively. Although Cain kills Abel, Seth is given in Abel’s place to continue the battle with the serpent’s seed.⁸ This second interpretation fits the later revelation that Christ descends from Seth (Luke 3:38). So from Genesis 4 on, the struggle between good and evil, between the human race and the serpent, continues until Christ

³ Unless otherwise noted, Bible quotations in this paper come from the NASB with some slight capitalization changes.

⁴ The intriguing textual feature of this verse is the reference to the “seed” or “descendant” of the woman as “He” (הוא). Thus this verse predicts that a descendant of the woman, an individual male, would deal a death blow to the serpent, later identified by the NT as Satan (Rev 12:9, 20:2). Paul may have been echoing this OT promise when he declared in Galatians 4:4 that Christ was “born of a woman.” The gospels likewise affirm the virgin conception of Christ as the son of a human woman alone (Matt 1:18–20, 23; Luke 1:31–35).

⁵ *TWOT*, 2: 912.

⁶ Elliott Johnson, “Progressive Revelation: Does Meaning Change?” unpublished paper (Baptist Bible Seminary, September 22, 2009), 3–4.

⁷ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 145.

⁸ Johnson, “Progressive Revelation,” oral remarks made in conjunction with paper presentation.

comes finally to crush the serpent's head—and by extension all his evil offspring—destroying them forever.⁹

Psalm 2:1–6

This Messianic psalm contains several references to violence or war.¹⁰ In the opening scene, the kings of the earth counsel together to rebel against the rule of the LORD and his Anointed (vv. 1–2). The LORD responds not only with derisive laughter but also with anger and fury (vv. 4–5). He has installed upon Zion his King (v. 6), who will receive from the LORD the nations as his inheritance (v. 8). The Messiah King will “break them with a rod of iron [and] shatter them like earthenware” (v. 9).¹¹ In the

⁹ Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 145.

¹⁰ Psalm 2 is a royal psalm of David (cf. Acts 4:25) which concerns the anointing and coronation of the Davidic king (Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991], 5: 64). In its historical context Psalm 2 has to do with the earthly Davidic ruler as the Lord's anointed (v. 2), king (v. 6), and son (vv. 7, 12). However, the NT writers see its ultimate fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the opinion of S. Lewis Johnson Jr., Psalm 2 is not a coronation psalm about the earthly Davidic king but rather “speaks directly of Jesus Christ by predictive prophecy” (*The Old Testament in the New* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980], 15). On the other hand Ryrie identifies the Anointed in this psalm as the “Davidic king *and ultimately* Jesus Christ” (*Ryrie Study Bible*, ad loc.; emphasis added). To put this into categories discussed by Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Psalm 2 is either an example of *literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment*, whereby the NT quotes a literal OT prophecy as literally fulfilled; *literal plus application*, whereby the NT quotes an OT passage as an application; or *literal plus typical*, whereby the NT quotes an OT passage as a type (*Israelology*, rev. ed. [Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2001], 843–44). Fruchtenbaum's point is that each of these types of usage may be considered “fulfillment.”

¹¹ Verse 9 contains a variant reflected in the translations. The NIV reads “You will rule them” because it follows the LXX translation which is based on an alternate vocalization of the Hebrew. Following the MT the ESV reads “You shall break them” (cf. NASB). So which is it, “rule”

future the LORD and his Anointed (the Messiah) will neither succumb to nor tolerate the rebellion of the nations. In anger and fury they will put down their rebellion by violence—shattering them as easily as an iron rod smashes pottery.

In light of this reality Psalm 2 concludes with a warning to the rulers of the nations to worship the LORD with reverence and trembling (v. 11), and to “Kiss the Son” (NIV) “that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled” (v. 12). So for the second time this psalm speaks of divine anger and wrath, in this case the wrath of the Son. And again the psalm speaks of destruction, here the threat of death for those who refuse to submit to God’s Son. The LORD’s Messiah is a Warrior King who will one day smash the rebellious nations.

Isaiah 9:6–7

In this well-known Messianic prophecy Isaiah predicts the birth of a child, a son “who will be given to us.” The government will rest on his shoulders and he will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom (Isa 9:6). His rule will be characterized by justice and righteousness, as well as unending peace (v. 7). In fact, one of his titles in this passage is “Prince of Peace.” Peace in the OT is the opposite not only of war but of “any disturbance in the communal well-being of the nation.”¹² Peace in the OT

or “break”? At first glance the NT seems to support “rule,” since Revelation 2:27, 12:5, and 19:15 follow the LXX in quoting Psalm 2:9. However, Johnson suggests that ποιμαίνω (“shepherd/rule”) can also mean “destroy” or “devastate,” as it does in Micah 5:6 (Heb. v. 5), Jeremiah 2:15 (Heb. v. 16), 6:3, 22:22, and Psalm 80:13 (Heb. v. 14). Thus Johnson follows the LXX understanding of the vocalization of the MT and believes John did, too: Jesus Christ will “shepherd” the nations in the sense of “devastate” or “destroy” them (*Old Testament in the New*, 19). This certainly makes sense in light of the parallel phrase in Psalm 2:9, “You shall shatter them like earthenware.” The same is true in Revelation 19:15 and the preceding phrase, “From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations.”

¹² Hartmut Beck and Colin Brown, “Peace,” in *NIDNTT*, 2: 777.

covers well-being in a wide sense, including prosperity, bodily health, good relations between nations and people, and salvation.¹³ Ultimately, peace is the gift of the LORD—he withdraws it in judgment, and he grants it as a gift to his people.¹⁴ The OT predicts a “universal and everlasting peace, and the coming of the day of salvation is frequently linked with the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:5–6), who as God’s anointed (Isa 61:1–2) is the bringer and founder of the kingdom of peace.”¹⁵ It is also worth noting in this passage that bringing everlasting peace to his people requires that God “break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian” (v. 4). The Messiah will bring Israel eternal peace by forcefully eliminating her oppressors forever.

Isaiah 11:4

In another of Isaiah’s famous Messianic passages the prophet identifies the Lord’s Anointed as a “shoot ... from the stem of Jesse” and “a branch from his roots” (Isa 11:1; cf. v. 10). The LORD’s Spirit will rest upon him, which will endow him with wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and the fear of the LORD (v. 2). His rule will be characterized by righteousness, fairness, and faithfulness (vv. 4a, 5) and will be marked by peace among the animal kingdom, peace between man and beast (vv. 6–9), and a glorious resting place for the nations (v. 10).

However, in the midst of this description of rest, peace, and righteous and fair judgment for the poor and afflicted, Isaiah describes another side of the Messiah’s rule: His punishment of evildoers: “He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked” (v. 4b). The righteous rule of the LORD’s Messiah is truly a two-edged sword: to the poor and afflicted of his people he brings fairness,

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 778.

¹⁵ Ibid., 779.

faithfulness, peace, and rest; but with a mere word he inflicts death and destruction upon His enemies.

Isaiah 53

The Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53 is one of the most important in all the OT. It is here that the suffering and death of the LORD's Messianic Servant is clearly portrayed. In graphic terms the chapter describes how the Messiah will be despised and forsaken of men (v. 3), suffer grief and anguish (vv. 10–11), and pour out himself to death (v. 12). He will suffer even though innocent himself of violence and deceit (v. 9). Why? He will bear *our* griefs and sorrows (v. 4), be pierced through for *our* transgressions and crushed for *our* iniquities (v. 5; cf. v. 8), and bear the iniquities and sins of *others* (vv. 11–12).

Perhaps more than any OT passage Isaiah 53 depicts the doctrine of penal substitution: the LORD's Messiah himself will bear the punishment for the sins of others as a substitutionary sacrifice—a guilt offering to God (v. 10)—so that those same sinful people might enjoy well-being (lit. peace), be healed (v. 5), and be justified—declared righteous—before God (v. 11). Not only will the Messiah bear this suffering and punishment for sin willingly, but he will do so as from the very hand of the LORD: the Messiah will be smitten by *God* (v. 4); the *LORD* will cause our iniquity to fall on Him (v. 6); and the *LORD* will be pleased to crush Him and put Him to grief (v. 10). As a result of his self-sacrifice for our sin, the Messiah will be blessed of the LORD—to see offspring and prolong his days, to prosper under the good pleasure of the LORD (v. 10), to be satisfied (v. 11), and to obtain a portion with the great and divide the booty with the strong (v. 12).

The suffering and death of the Messiah in this passage is not pointless but purposeful. The reason he will not open his mouth but be led like a lamb silently to slaughter (v. 7) is because he must die as a substitutionary sacrifice for sinners. The violence of his death in our place accomplishes our peace with God.

Some object to this legal interpretation of the language, arguing that it would be unjust for the righteous to suffer for the

wicked and for the wicked to be declared innocent. However, such a surprising development is consistent with the ironic nature of this song. It does seem unfair for the innocent to die for the guilty. But what is God to do when all have sinned and wandered off like stray sheep (cf. v. 6)? Covenant law demands punishment, but punishment in this case would mean annihilation of what God has created. God's justice, as demanded by the law, must be satisfied. To satisfy his justice, he does something seemingly unjust. He punishes his sinless servant, the only one who has not strayed off! In the progress of biblical revelation, we discover that the sinless servant is really God in the flesh, who offers himself because he is committed to the world he has created. If his justice can only be satisfied if he himself endures the punishment, then so be it. What appears to be an act of injustice is really love satisfying the demands of justice!"¹⁶

The Messiah Servant of Isaiah 53 does not endure suffering because he is too weak or because he somehow opposes all violence on principle. According to Isaiah 11:4, he will slay the wicked with the breath of his lips. No, the Messiah passively yields to suffering here as a sacrificial lamb to bear our sins away by his death and thus accomplish our salvation.

Isaiah 61:1–2

Perhaps one of the most interesting and widely-discussed Messianic passages of Scripture is Isaiah 61:1–2. Here the Messiah himself speaks, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me" (v. 1a). The work of the Messiah will be to "bring good news to the afflicted," "bind up the brokenhearted," "proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners," and "to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD" (vv. 1b–2a). The ministry of the Messiah will be one of healing, freedom, and divine favor upon God's people.

When Jesus began his public ministry he quoted this very text as being fulfilled by him (Luke 4:17–21); however,

¹⁶ NET Bible, note on Isaiah 53:11, available online at www.bible.org.

whenever we cite this text in Luke we always point out that Jesus stopped quoting Isaiah 61 in the middle of v. 2 and did not read the next line, “and the day of vengeance of our God.” The noun translated “vengeance” here (נקָם) is derived from the verb נָקַם, “take vengeance, revenge, to avenge oneself.”¹⁷ Any honest treatment of the Bible as a whole must concede that it presents a comprehensive portrait of a God who is not only merciful but also just, not only loving and good but also holy and wrathful. The wrath and vengeance of God poured out upon his enemies resulting in their destruction is not a pretty picture in Scripture, but it is nevertheless a true one. Here in Isaiah 61 the Messiah himself speaks of his coming ministry not only in the positive terms of healing and freedom for the people of God, but also in the negative term of God’s vengeance taken upon his enemies.¹⁸

Zechariah 9:9–10

This prophecy speaks to the Messiah’s personal character as well as the character of his coming rule. He will come to Jerusalem as her King, just and having salvation, yet humbly, mounted on a donkey (v. 9).¹⁹ His coming reign will be characterized by tranquility and universal rule: “He will speak peace to the nations” and “His dominion will be ... to the ends of

¹⁷ *TWOT*, 2: 598.

¹⁸ The taking of vengeance by God entails the shedding of blood and death; this is the inescapable implication of Scripture on this subject (*ibid.*). The “day of vengeance” relates to what Isaiah earlier referred to as the “Day of the LORD” (Isa 2:12, 13:6; cf. Joel 2:1). Two other times Isaiah refers to this day as the day of the LORD’s vengeance (Isa 34:8, 63:4; cf. Jer 46:10) (Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, OTL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969], 367).

¹⁹ The donkey is a peaceful and lowly animal in contrast to the war horse of v. 10. This is fitting for the Messiah who is himself humble and comes speaking peace to the nations (v. 10). But the donkey is also a princely mount (Judg 10:4, 12:14; 2 Sam 16:2). The royal mount used by David and his sons was the related mule (2 Sam 18:9; 1 Kgs 1:33) (*NASB Study Bible*, note on Zech 9:9).

the earth" (v. 10). The gospel writers find this prophecy fulfilled in the triumphal entry of Christ to Jerusalem the week of his crucifixion (Matt 21:4–5; John 12:14–15). As Luke records this event he notes how Jesus wept over the city and lamented, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace!" (Luke 19:42). Jesus goes on to predict the coming destruction of the city and her people for their rejection of their Messiah (vv. 43–44). The coming humble Messiah King predicted by Zechariah brings with him a message of peace, but this peace is enjoyed only by those who will accept him.

In light of these OT texts several observations are in order. The OT predicts several facets to the Messiah's work. He will provide peace for God's people *and* destroy God's enemies. These go hand in hand: destroying God's enemies paves the way for giving God's people lasting peace. The Messiah will also offer himself as a sacrificial lamb for the sins of the people and thus purchase their salvation. This is the complete prediction of the Messiah's work in the OT. He will not be just a sacrificial lamb or just a warrior king, but somehow he will be both. This anticipates perfectly the revelation of Jesus the Messiah in the NT. Next we will consider the relevant NT passages in their canonical order.

Matthew 2:13–14

No sooner had Jesus' life begun than it was threatened by violent King Herod. God knew Herod would try to destroy Jesus, so God warned Joseph to flee the country (Matt 2:13). Joseph gathered his family and escaped in the night for Egypt (v. 14). Murderous Herod went on a rampage and sent his soldiers to slaughter all male children in the vicinity of Bethlehem ages two and under (v. 16). God protected Jesus and his parents and in that sense resisted Herod's evil. God did not allow them to passively sit in Bethlehem and allow their child to be murdered. Even after Herod died and God brought the family back to Israel, God kept them from Judea and led them to Galilee in order to

protect them from Archelaus, Herod's tyrannical son.²⁰ The peaceful existence of Joseph and his family did not preclude his taking active efforts, with God's help, toward self-preservation.

Matthew 5:9

With this verse we come to the most widely-discussed passage on Jesus and war: the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew notes that Jesus directs this discourse toward his disciples. With crowds accompanying them, Jesus sits on a mount, his disciples come to him, and he opens his mouth to teach them (Matt 5:1–2). Part one of this sermon contains the so-called “Beatitudes” because vv. 3–11 all begin with the word “Blessed” (μακάριοι). While the word can mean happy on the basis of one's circumstances (e.g. Luke 23:29; 1 Cor 7:40), it also indicates happiness from a more transcendent perspective: to be the privileged recipient of God's favor.²¹ Such a person is blessed in the midst of and in spite of his circumstances, as this passage makes clear: Jesus calls blessed the poor (v. 3), those who mourn (v. 4), hunger, and thirst (v. 6), and who are persecuted (v. 10), insulted, and falsely spoken evil of (v. 11). They are blessed ultimately because their reward in heaven is great (v. 12).

In the midst of these Beatitudes Jesus pronounces, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (v. 9). A “peacemaker” (εἰρηνοποιός) is a person who strives to reconcile individuals who are in disagreement.²² He comes between two contending parties and seeks to establish peace

²⁰ According to F. F. Bruce, “Archelaus had all his father's defects of character with but little of his administrative and diplomatic ability” (*New Testament History* [New York: Doubleday, 1969], 24). Archelaus's tyrannical rule proved so oppressive that Rome had him removed from power over Judea (*ibid.*, 25).

²¹ BDAG, 610–11.

²² *Ibid.*, 288.

and concord between them.²³ But God's peacemakers *in* the world will not always be at peace *with* the world, for in this text persecution follows peacemaking (vv. 10–12). Nevertheless, God's peacemakers will forever be known as the sons of God, for Christ declares them to be so in this text.²⁴

Matthew 5:38–42 (Luke 6:29–30)

This passage comes at a point in the Sermon when Jesus presents contrasts between his teaching and the customary teaching of the day (note the repetitive formula, "You have heard ... But I say to you").²⁵ Two of these contrasting teachings concern violence and hatred. In the first one (Matt 5:38–42), Jesus exhorts his disciples to "turn the other cheek," a phrase frozen in our American lexicon as a remnant of our Christian heritage. They had heard it said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" (Exod 21:24; cf. Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21). But in contrast Jesus forbids his disciples to "resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also" (Matt 5:39). Jesus offers further illustrations of this principle in vv. 40–42: if anyone sues you for your shirt, give him your coat; if anyone forces you to go a mile, go with him two; and, "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you."

The verb "resist" (ἀνθίστημι) in v. 39 means to set oneself against or to oppose a person or a power.²⁶ Not to resist here is the opposite of "an eye for an eye," the *lex talionis* or law of retaliation found in the Mosaic Law. The law appears in contexts of civil code for theocratic national Israel (see OT texts in previous paragraph). But Jesus is not speaking in a civil context to governing officials in Matthew 5, but to his individual

²³ Werner Foerster, "εἰρηνοποιός," in *TDNT*, 2: 419.

²⁴ John MacArthur, *Matthew 1–7* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 218.

²⁵ This method amazed the crowds who listened, "for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt 7:28–29).

²⁶ BDAG, 80.

disciples about their personal behavior. Rather than use the *lex talionis* as a pretext for exacting personal revenge (what the Jews had apparently done with this law), Jesus' followers are not to retaliate at all. The four illustrations seem hyperbolic for shock value: not only don't slap back when insultingly slapped, but offer to be slapped again;²⁷ not only don't fight over the right to your shirt, but give up your coat as well; not only don't lash out against an unjust demand for your labor, but "go the extra mile" (another biblical phrase frozen in the American vernacular); not only don't exact interest (cf. Exod 22:25; Lev 25:37; Deut 23:19), but give freely to anyone who asks of you. True heart righteousness will manifest itself by repaying evil deeds with good, not by striking back when wronged (cf. Rom 12:19–21).²⁸

One more point about this passage. Since the background of v. 41 is the military practice of pressing civilians into forced service (cf. Matt 27:32), Jesus likewise stands against the Zealots, whose express goal was violent action to overthrow the occupying Romans. But Jesus teaches his disciples "to take a contrary line to the Zealots, not to resist violence or retaliate against it, but to turn the other cheek and volunteer to go a second mile when their services were conscripted by the military for one mile."²⁹

Matthew 5:43–48 (Luke 6:31–36)

²⁷ Commentators point out that a blow to the right cheek by a right-handed person would be a backhanded slap, not a punch with the fist—"more of an insult than an act of violence" (*NASB Study Bible*, ad loc.).

²⁸ "The entire pericope deals with the heart's attitude, the better righteousness" (D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 8: 156).

²⁹ Bruce, *NT History*, 181.

Following on the heels of the previous passage, Matthew 5:43–48 contrasts love and hate.³⁰ Here Jesus' reference to the customary teaching of the day combines a Mosaic commandment, "You shall love your neighbor" (Lev 19:18), with a manmade addition, "and hate your enemy." Here Jesus is clearly dealing with a distortion of the Law, for nowhere does Moses command Israel to "hate your enemy." Apparently the Jews were interpreting the commandment to love one's "neighbor" as a license to hate others.³¹ But Jesus will have none of it: true disciples will *love* their enemies and *pray* for their persecutors (Matt 5:44). In so doing they will be imitators of God their Father, who blesses both the evil and the good with sun and rain (v. 45; cf. v. 48). Verses 46–47 are a direct rebuke to the Jews, who loved and interacted with only their fellow Jews. But in so doing they were no different than the "tax collectors" and "Gentiles," those they themselves despised. True love which mimics that of the heavenly Father is no respecter of persons.

Matthew 8:5–13 (Luke 7:1–10)

Matthew 8:5–13 is significant in that Jesus interacts directly with a professional soldier—in this case a Roman centurion. The passage is noteworthy on several levels. First, the man is a Gentile, and rarely do we read of Jesus interacting with Gentiles in the four gospels.³² Second, the man is a Roman soldier—a

³⁰ It seems not only to relate to the previous section but also to build upon it and take it deeper: taking vengeance or doing good reflects the heart attitude of hate or love. At the same time, these attitudes will manifest themselves in one's outward behavior toward others.

³¹ In another setting Jesus answers the question "Who is my neighbor?" with the parable of the Good Samaritan, challenging his Jewish interlocutor to "go and do the same," that is, to show love to anyone in need, including the despised Samaritans (Luke 10:25–37).

³² Mark 7:24–30 records Jesus' interaction with a Syrophenician Greek woman and John 4:1–42, his ministry to mixed-race Samaritans.

hated member of the oppressive foreign military occupiers of Palestine. But third, the man expressed genuine humility and faith before Jesus: he knew he was not worthy for Jesus to come under his roof (Matt 8:8a); and he had faith in the authority of Jesus—that with a mere word Jesus could heal his sick servant (vv. 8b–9). Fourth, Jesus marvels at the centurion’s faith and uses it as an opportunity to rebuke the Jews for their unbelief, promise a place in his kingdom for the Gentiles, and predict eternal judgment for the Jews, the “sons of the kingdom,” who reject him (vv. 10–13). Fifth, Jesus heals the centurion’s servant as per his request (v. 13). Finally, granted this might be considered an argument from silence, it is still noteworthy that Jesus expresses no disapproval of the centurion’s occupation as a professional soldier.³³

Matthew 10:12–15 (Luke 9:3–5, 10:5–12)

In this passage Jesus sends his disciples out to preach. When they enter a village, they are to seek a worthy home in which to stay. Upon entering the house, they are to give it their greeting (Matt 10:12):³⁴ “If the house is worthy, give it your *blessing of peace*,” literally, “your peace is to come upon it” (v. 13a). In other words, they are to stay in that house. But if it is not worthy, “take back your blessing of peace,” literally, “your peace is to return to you” (v. 13b). In other words, they are not to stay but leave. Then, “as you go out of that house or that city, shake

While Jesus ministered to these other peoples, the Jews were the main focus of his earthly service because he “was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 15:24). Likewise, when Jesus sent his disciples to preach it was only to the Jews and not to the Gentiles or Samaritans (10:5–6).

³³ Similarly, when soldiers came to John the Baptist asking what fruits of repentance they should perform, John’s answer was not to quit the military, but only to cease certain unethical practices typical of soldiers (Luke 3:14).

³⁴ When Luke records Jesus’ similar instructions to the seventy he specifies the greeting, “Peace *be* to this house” (Luke 10:5).

the dust off your feet” (v. 14). They are to do this “as a testimony against them” (Luke 9:5).³⁵ This act marks the place as polluted and liable to God’s judgment.³⁶

Jesus leaves no doubt about the judgment to be suffered by those who reject his disciples’ message: “Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for *the* land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city” (Matt 10:15). In Luke’s account of similar instructions given to the seventy, Jesus adds his woes against the cities of Galilee. It will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for them (Luke 10:13–15; cf. Matt 11:21–24). Tyre and Sidon and Sodom and Gomorrah will bear their judgment, but it will be worse for the Jews who heard their Messiah yet rejected him. No, Jesus does not strike down the inhabitants of these towns on the spot for rejecting him, nor does he command or allow his disciples to strike back against unbelief in their ministry. Jesus did not come the first time to destroy but to save (Luke 9:56), and his followers are not to minister with violence as they serve him. But Jesus does predict a day of destruction for those who reject him, and he instructs his disciples to warn people of the same.

Matthew 10:34 (Luke 12:51)

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” At first glance this verse seems to blatantly contradict Jesus’ statement that he did not come to destroy people’s lives but to save them (Luke 9:56), as well as his commands to be peacemakers, not to take vengeance, and to love one’s enemies. However, the context indicates that the “sword” here is not literal but a metaphor for interpersonal conflict (Matt 10:35–36).³⁷ Furthermore, Jesus “came to bring”

³⁵ In Luke’s recorded instructions for the seventy, the disciples are to verbalize their act, “Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off *in protest* against you” (Luke 10:11).

³⁶ Carson, “Matthew,” 246.

³⁷ This is even clearer in the parallel account, where the “sword” of Matt 10:34 is replaced by the word “division” (διαμερισμόν) in Luke

division and “to set” family members “against” each other not in the sense that he is an avowed home-wrecker, but that because of sin and rebellion belief in him will often bring opposition from one’s unbelieving family; and believers *must* put their devotion to Jesus above their loved ones and even their own lives (vv. 37–39). Finally, this passage is relevant to Jesus’ first coming and his bringing the message of salvation, not to his second coming and his bringing judgment, when the sword of his mouth will literally destroy all his enemies (Rev 19:15).

Matthew 11:12 (Luke 16:16)

Matthew 11:12 is an enigmatic verse. What does Jesus mean, “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force”? The main question is how to translate the verb βιάζεται and the noun βιασταί. If the verb here is middle deponent, then the kingdom “is forcefully advancing” (cf. NIV); if passive, then the kingdom “suffers violence” (cf. NASB, NKJV, ESV, NET). The middle voice is more common for this verb, but the passive voice fits the negative context better.³⁸ However, the noun βιασταί almost certainly refers negatively to “violent men.” How are they taking the kingdom of heaven by force? We need to note the context. Jesus has already warned his disciples of rejection and persecution as he sent them out to preach of the coming kingdom (10:5–23). John the Baptist, the immediate subject of Jesus’ remarks in 11:12, has been imprisoned and wonders if Jesus is really the expected One (vv. 2–3). The expectation of the Jews, including John the Baptist and Jesus’ disciples, was that the Messiah would come and usher in the

12:51, and family members being “set against” themselves and “enemies” (Matt 10:35) is described as their being “divided” (διαμερισμένοι, Luke 12:52, διαμερισθήσονται, v. 53).

³⁸ The parallel statement in Luke 16:16, “the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached,” seems to support the middle voice and NIV rendering of the verb in Matt 11:12 (Carson, “Matthew,” 269).

promised kingdom in military triumph. But this is not what the Messiah comes first to do. He comes first to be rejected as the Suffering Messiah. This explains how the proclamation of the kingdom by John the Baptist, Christ, and Christ's disciples could be met with violent rejection, and yet God's overarching plan to establish his kingdom could still be accomplished.

Matthew 12:22–29

In this passage Jesus heals a demon-possessed man and is accused by the Pharisees of casting out demons by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons. Jesus responds by asking how a kingdom divided against itself can stand. How can Satan's kingdom stand if Satan is casting out Satan (vv. 25–26)? Furthermore, if Jesus casts out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do their people cast them out?³⁹ On the contrary, if Jesus casts out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon them (vv. 27–28). Finally, Jesus asserts that no one can enter a strong man's house unless he first binds the strong man. Then he can plunder his house (v. 29).

In this last illustration, the "strong man" represents Satan and Jesus is the one who has bound him. As Grudem explains, "During his earthly ministry, Jesus ... entered the strong man's 'house' (the world of unbelievers who are under the bondage of Satan), and he was plundering his house, that is, freeing people from satanic bondage."⁴⁰ This brings up an important point regarding Jesus and warfare, namely the spiritual warfare Jesus engaged in during his earthly ministry. While Jesus did not use violence or fight physical battles with his human enemies during his earthly life, he did conduct spiritual warfare against the spiritual forces of darkness. While Jesus cast out demons because of his compassion for suffering people, he also did so to

³⁹ Jesus calls those who cast out demons the Pharisee's "sons" in v. 27. This could just refer to the Jewish people generally, or perhaps to those instructed by the Pharisees (ibid., 288).

⁴⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Leicester, U.K.: IVP; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 418.

demonstrate his power as the Messiah over Satan the enemy of God and man. In this sense Jesus took part in warfare even during his earthly life, which would culminate in his defeat of the devil at the cross.⁴¹

Matthew 22:7

Since Matthew 22:7 is part of a parable, we need to be careful how much doctrine we try to extract from it.⁴² Nevertheless, there still might be something we can take away from this parable as it relates to Jesus' attitude toward war. In this Parable of the Marriage Feast Jesus describes how a king sends his servants out to invite people to the wedding feast of his son (vv. 3a, 4). Some of those invited merely ignore the invitation (vv. 3b, 5), but others mistreat and kill the king's servants (v. 6). The king's response is swift and harsh: "But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire" (v. 7). Later the king punishes a man who comes to the wedding feast improperly dressed (vv. 11-12). The king commands, "Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (v. 13).

Jesus describes common events in this parable that were well known to his hearers: the wrath of kings and their use of armies to punish evildoers and destroy their cities. But does Jesus *approve* of such things? He does not expressly *disapprove*, but we would not expect him to delve into such matters in the telling of a parable. But the way Jesus tells the parable seems to give credence to the idea that in Jesus' view the king acted appropriately: his subjects killed his servants unjustly and

⁴¹ I thank my colleague Dr. Gary Gromacki for bringing this aspect of Jesus' relationship to warfare to my attention.

⁴² Osborne warns that we must take care not to "base doctrines upon the parables without checking corroborative details elsewhere.... We must recognize that the great themes of the parables carry theological weight, but we must exercise great care in delineating the theological core of each parable" (Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1991], 249).

therefore he was justified to destroy “those murders and set their city on fire.” We must remember that this parable follows Matthew 21:33–44, where Jesus tells the Parable of the Landowner. In this story a landowner sees to it that those who killed his servants and his son are punished for their deeds. Jesus asks the Jewish authorities, “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?” (v. 40). They answer, “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the *proper* seasons” (v. 41). Jesus’ application here is that God will do the same regarding his kingdom: he will take it from these Jews and give it to another group “producing the fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust” (vv. 43–44).

Returning to Matthew 22:13, this verse anticipates what Jesus will later describe as the eternal fire preserved for the unbelievers he will judge when he returns (25:30, 41, 46a). We may conclude that in these parables Jesus speaks of kings and others in authority justly punishing evildoers as standing for the just punishment he himself will one day mete out against those who oppose him. Human authorities deal out punishment against evildoers as extensions of God’s justice on this earth. They also anticipate Christ’s destruction of his enemies which he will carry out when he returns to earth to set up his kingdom.

Matthew 22:15–22

“Render unto Caesar” is another biblical phrase locked into our American lingo. While not directly related to war, this passage concerns the related and crucial topic of governmental authority and the believer. In Matthew 22:15–22 the Pharisees and Herodians band together to set a trap for Jesus (v. 15). They pose this question, “Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?” (v. 17). If Jesus says “No,” the Herodians, who support Herod and his collaboration with the Roman occupiers, could accuse Jesus of tax evasion and treason. If Jesus says “Yes,” the Pharisees, who oppose the Roman occupation on principle,

could denounce Jesus as disloyal to his nation.⁴³ Jesus' answer is masterful: since the denarius used for the poll-tax bears Caesar's image, let Caesar have what is his, but give "to God the things that are God's" (v. 21). "Jesus recognized that Caesar exercised his current overlordship over the Jewish people, and would continue to exercise it, so long as divine providence permitted it."⁴⁴ So Caesar should receive his due, but God should receive one's ultimate devotion.

Matthew 24:6–7 (Mark 13:7–8; Luke 21:9–10)

These verses open the Olivet Discourse, which culminates in Jesus' description of his coming at the end of the age (Matt 24:3b, 29–31). But first there will be "wars and rumors of wars," when "nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (v. 7). Nothing is said to condone or condemn these wars, but only that they will occur. Nevertheless, these wars, along with famines and earthquakes (v. 7), "are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs" (v. 8); they are not yet the end of the age. That will come when the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel takes his stand in the holy place (v. 15). In those days "there will be a great tribulation" (v. 21) followed by the glorious coming of the Son of Man in the clouds (v. 30; cf. Dan 7:13).

Back to the "wars and rumors of wars," what prompts this entire discourse is Jesus' prediction that the temple buildings of Jerusalem will be utterly destroyed (Matt 24:2). In the parallel accounts we read that his disciples were at that moment admiring the beauty of the temple complex (Mark 13:1; Luke 21:5). It is at this point that Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and warns the listeners of wars, famines, and earthquakes as the "beginning of birth pangs" (Matt 24:8; Mark

⁴³ Carson, "Matthew," 458–59; cf. *NASB Study Bible*, note on Matthew 22:15–17. Later the Sanhedrin would accuse Jesus before Pilate of "forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar" (Luke 23:2) (Bruce, *NT History*, 199).

⁴⁴ Bruce, *NT History*, 180.

13:8). Many wars and rumors of wars have taken place in this time between Christ's comings. Of closest relevance to the disciples was the impending destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. We know that this occurred as God's judgment upon Israel for rejecting their Messiah. Jesus says as much when he weeps over Jerusalem the day of his Triumphal Entry, saying,

If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation. (Luke 19:42-44)

Another time Jesus laments over Jerusalem as the city that kills her prophets and stones those sent to her. He expresses his desire to bless her, but she is unwilling. "Behold," Jesus concludes, "your house is being left to you desolate" (Matt 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35). Jerusalem suffered destruction by an invading foreign army used as an instrument of divine judgment. Whether or not Rome made war justly is another issue; wickedness and injustice will always answer to God (Gen 15:14; cf. Isa 13:1-5, 14:1-23). But the principle of human government as a just instrument of God's wrath against evildoers stands firm in Scripture (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pet 2:13-14).⁴⁵

Matthew 25:31-33, 41-46

At the end of the Olivet Discourse, after describing the Great Tribulation, his glorious return, and the need to be alert for his coming, Jesus explains the judgment he will carry out when he

⁴⁵ Furthermore, we must remember that God not only condoned but commanded Israel's invasion and military conquest of Canaan both to punish the wickedness of its inhabitants as well as to fulfill his promise to Abraham.

returns. He will gather the nations and separate them as a shepherd does his sheep and goats (Matt 25:31–33). The sheep on his right represent believers who will inherit the kingdom (v. 34), while the goats on the left are unbelievers. Christ will send these accursed ones into “the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (v. 41). “These will go away into eternal punishment” (v. 46a). In that day the Good Shepherd of his people will be the Avenging Destroyer of his enemies.

Matthew 26:52 (Luke 22:51; John 18:11)

Our American lexicon has adopted yet another saying of Jesus often rendered, “he who lives by the sword will die by the sword.” The actual wording is, “all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword” (Matt 26:52b). Having the character of a proverb, this statement might be understood as a universal principle against every taking up of a sword. However, taken in its context the statement must first be understood as relating to Jesus’ rebuke of Peter for cutting off the ear of the high priest’s slave (v. 51). “Put your sword back into its place,” commanded Jesus (v. 52a). Two of the other three parallel accounts likewise include a verbal response to Peter’s violent action: “Stop! No more of this” (Luke 22:51a); and, “Put the sword into the sheath” (John 18:11a).

We should not be too hard on Peter for what he did; after all, had not Jesus just told his disciples to obtain swords (Luke 22:36)?⁴⁶ For all Peter knew, maybe this was why they needed them, to defend their Lord! We might even commend Peter here for his bravery since we are so quick to remember his act of cowardice committed so soon after. But not only did Jesus rebuke Peter for what he did; Jesus then healed the slave’s ear (Luke 22:51). Clearly violence—armed resistance against the governing authorities—is not what is called for here. Why not? For one, throughout his ministry Jesus would not side with the Zealots and their method of violent resistance. Jesus was preparing his apostles to take the gospel to the world and build

⁴⁶ I will deal with this passage separately below.

his church, and getting killed for armed resistance would make for a short apostolic ministry—hence the proverb to Peter against taking up his sword.

But the context introduces another reason for not drawing the sword in this situation: Jesus *must* be arrested and suffer death at the hands of wicked men (Luke 9:22) in fulfillment of the Scriptures (Matt 26:54). After all, says Jesus, “the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11b). Jesus could have easily prevented his execution through angelic intervention (Matt 26:53). But Jesus cannot and will not stop it. Peter must not try to stop it either; for it *must* take place according to divine plan.

Matthew 26:63 and 27:12–14 (Mark 15:5; Luke 23:9; John 19:9)

Two passages in Matthew and several parallel accounts describe Jesus as silent before his accusers. In Matthew 26:63a Jesus “kept silent” when asked to respond to the witnesses testifying against him. Later in Matthew 27:12–14 Jesus is silent twice, when accused by the chief priests and elders before Pilate and also when questioned by Pilate regarding those testifying against Him (cf. Mark 15:5; John 19:9). Luke 23:9 adds that when questioned by Herod the same night Jesus “answered him nothing.”⁴⁷ Now at first glance these passages seem to support the idea that Jesus both preached (cf. Matt 5:38–39) and practiced a completely passive and silent response—a “non-response”—to any and all evil aggression. But a closer examination of these passages tells a different story.

First, most of the above passages give the specific *context* of Jesus’ silence: he refuses to answer the *false accusations* being brought against him (cf. Matt 26:59–62, 27:12, 14; Mark 15:4).⁴⁸

⁴⁷ As we saw earlier, Isaiah predicted that in the face of afflictions the Messiah would “not open His mouth,” and would thus be “like a sheep that is silent before its shearers” (Isa 53:7).

⁴⁸ This is also true in Luke 23. Even though Jesus’ silence before Herod is total (v. 9), Luke does add that the context is vehement accusations being made against him (v. 10). The only exception to this seems to be John 19:9 where Jesus is silent when asked by Pilate,

Second, Jesus' silence is clearly not absolute. Even in the passages that note his silence Jesus responds verbally to other questions (cf. Matt 26:64, 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 22:67–70, 23:3; John 18:20–23, 34–37, 19:11); and in one case Jesus does defend himself verbally against his unjust treatment. When struck for his answer to the high priest's question, Jesus challenges, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" (John 18:23).

Now it could still be said that Jesus' responses throughout these events are strictly verbal—he never tries physically to resist the evil or defend or rescue himself from his fate. This is true; however, as we have already seen above (Isaiah 53, Matt 26:52), Jesus *had* to suffer and die at the hands of wicked men (Luke 24:26, 44, 46). This fate was not only predicted (Acts 4:25–27) but preordained for him (Acts 2:23a, 4:28).⁴⁹ It was because of his unique role as the sacrificial lamb for the sins of the world that Jesus did not and could not resist the unfair and evil treatment which culminated in his crucifixion.

Mark 9:50

In this verse Jesus says to "be at peace with one another." This could be taken as a command for passive non-violence, but let us take a closer look. The wider context of this statement is Jesus' response to his disciples' opposing someone not in their group (vv. 38–42), and the need for Jesus' followers to make sacrifices in order to follow him (vv. 43–48). The immediate context of the statement on peace is Jesus' concluding words of v. 49 that "everyone will be salted with fire." Though it follows references to the unquenchable fire of hell reserved for unbelievers (vv. 43–48), the fire of v. 49 seems to refer to the purification of believers. In this sense there is a connection between vv. 43–48 and v. 49: the price one must pay for

"Where are You from?" But Jesus immediately breaks his silence in v. 11.

⁴⁹ But this does not clear the responsible parties of personal guilt (Matt 26:24; Acts 2:23b).

following Jesus. Jesus' disciples must be willing to give up anything and everything up to and including their whole selves as sacrifices seasoned with salt and offered to God.⁵⁰

While salt is still the subject in v. 50, the association shifts from cultic to domestic use: "Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty *again*?" The requirements of discipleship are still in view. Only loyalty to Jesus and his gospel will insure that his followers retain their salt-like benefit for the world. The loss of that distinctive mark of discipleship will make them worthless. This brings us to Jesus' concluding words, "Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another." We come full circle to the situation that prompted this discourse: the disciples' trying to stop someone from casting out demons in Jesus' name because he was not in their group. Jesus commands them not to hinder the man because the circle of discipleship is wider than the Twelve (vv. 38–40) and kindness shown toward a fellow believer will be rewarded (v. 41). Therefore, Jesus' disciples retain their saltiness when they are at peace with and do not oppose their fellow Christ-followers. "Strife is resolved and peace restored when men recognize in one another a common commitment to Jesus and the gospel, and to the servant's vocation."⁵¹

Luke 1:79

With his tongue finally loosed upon the birth of his son John, Zacharias prophesies, blessing the Lord for accomplishing redemption for his people (Luke 1:64–68). God has raised up a horn of salvation for Israel in the house of David his servant,

⁵⁰ The connection of salt to fire recalls the fact that OT temple sacrifices were accompanied by salt (Lev 2:13; Ezek 43:24; cf. Exod 30:35). In the same way "every disciple is to be a sacrifice for God (cf. Rom 12:1).... The disciples must be seasoned with salt, like the sacrifice. This will take place through fiery trials (cf. 1 Pet 1:7, 4:12), through which God will purge away everything contrary to his will" (William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 349).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 350.

“salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us” (vv. 69–71). Zacharias’s son John will prepare the way of the Lord, who comes “to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (v. 79).

The Jewish expectation for the Messiah was immediate deliverance from the Roman oppressors. The Messiah’s future physical deliverance of Israel will come as promised, but the deliverance Christ brings at his first coming is of a different sort—a spiritual one. Zacharias’s prophecy includes this idea, speaking as it does of the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of sins (v. 77) and the way of peace coming to “those who sit in darkness” (v. 79a; cf. Isa 9:2).⁵² The “way of peace” in Zacharias’s prophecy is the spiritual peace with God which believer’s in Christ enjoy.

Luke 2:14

“Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.” “I heard the bells on Christmas day, their old familiar carols play ... of peace on earth, good will to men.” So say two well-known Christmas carols based on Luke 2:14. As Zacharias prophesied that the Messiah would guide his people into the way of peace in Luke 1:79, so in 2:14 when Jesus is born, the angelic host cries out in praise, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” Although the KJV translation of “on earth peace, good will toward men” is well-known and preserved in our Christmas tradition (cf. also NKJV), the NASB and similar translations (e.g. NIV, ESV, HCSV, NLT, NET) are probably correct that the peace Christ brings is for those favored by God. The difference in translation reflects a textual variant, ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκία (“good will toward men”; see TR, MT) versus ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας (“among men with whom He is pleased”; see UBSGNT 4th ed., Nestle-Aland 27th ed.). The genitive reading is the more difficult and is supported by

⁵² Matthew notes that Christ fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 9:2 by beginning his ministry of preaching the good news of the kingdom in Galilee (Matt 4:12–17).

the oldest representatives of the Alexandrian and Western texts. The nominative reading may have arisen through transcriptional oversight.⁵³ “The meaning seems to be, not that divine peace can be bestowed only where human good will is already present, but that at the birth of the Saviour God’s peace rests on those whom he has chosen in accord with his good pleasure.”⁵⁴ Those in a right spiritual relationship with God through His Son enjoy spiritual peace with God even while here on this troubled earth.

Luke 6:27–36

Much of this passage was covered earlier in Matthew 5. With some variation, Luke 6:29–30 matches Matthew 5:38–42, and Luke 6:27–28, 31–36 matches Matthew 5:43–48. Here I just want to touch on the famous “Golden Rule” of Jesus in Luke 6:31: “Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.” How far should believers take this principle? As was pointed out in Matthew 5, the context here is Jesus’ instruction to his disciples regarding their personal behavior and ministry toward others when wronged. Even when they are hated, ostracized, insulted, and scorned as evil for their faith in Christ (Luke 6:22), they are not to take vengeance or retaliate with force, but instead are to love, do good, bless, and pray for those who are against them (vv. 27–29). This is what the Golden Rule of v. 31 is talking about, for as Jesus goes on to say in vv. 32–34, even unbelievers love and do good to those who love and do good to them. What sets Jesus’ followers apart is the way they treat their enemies: loving them and doing good to them shows believers to be “sons of the Most High,” who “Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *men*” (v. 35). This is how believers are to live as followers and heralds of Christ in this world.

⁵³ *TCGNT*, 111.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Luke 9:54–56

On his way to Jerusalem Jesus sends messengers to a Samaritan village to make preparations (Luke 9:51–52). When the Samaritans refuse to receive Jesus, James and John ask to call fire down from heaven to consume them (vv. 53–54). Jesus' response is to rebuke them and say, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (vv. 55–56a). Many early manuscripts do not contain these words of Jesus, and while included in the NASB they are placed in brackets. The NIV relegates them to a footnote.

But granting their authenticity for the sake of argument, how shall we take Jesus' teaching here? To begin with, aside from the textual question, Jesus does rebuke James and John and does not allow them to destroy the Samaritans. This is in keeping with what we have already seen in Matthew 5 and Luke 6 regarding the way for Jesus' followers to respond to personal opposition to their ministry. They are not to exact vengeance. As for Jesus' declaration regarding himself, "the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them," this is certainly true and attested in other undisputed passages (e.g. cf. Luke 19:10; John 3:17).⁵⁵ This is in keeping with the mission of Jesus' first coming, not to destroy but to save, not to judge but to provide the way of salvation. But when Jesus comes again he *will* judge and destroy his enemies.

Luke 14:31–32

This passage is the second of two illustrations Jesus gives to punctuate his teaching on the cost of discipleship. In the first, a builder must count the cost lest he suffer ridicule for starting a project he could not finish. In the second, a king must consider before battle whether he can defeat the enemy if outnumbered, "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace" (Luke 14:32). It must be acknowledged that this text is illustrative, not didactic, in

⁵⁵ Ibid., 125.

character. Jesus is not directly offering instruction on how to conduct warfare. Nevertheless, Jesus uses something well known to his audience, warfare, to illustrate his point, and in so doing *could* be taken as implicitly recognizing not only the reality but also the legitimacy of warfare at times in a fallen world. After all, Israel itself gained its Promised Land by divinely sanctioned and aided warfare. It seems hard to believe that Jesus would use something intrinsically evil (war) to illustrate something good (discipleship and counting the cost) without further clarification.⁵⁶

Luke 22:35–38

“This short passage is difficult to interpret,” says Walter Liefeld.⁵⁷ The problem is that Jesus’ apparent support for swords here does not square with his reaction to Peter’s use of one later in the garden (Matt 26:52). This leads commentators to suggest that Jesus’ talk here of swords is strictly figurative. Some interpret Jesus’ words, “It is enough,” in v. 38 as proof: when the disciples misunderstand Jesus and start counting swords, Jesus says in essence, “Enough of this!”⁵⁸ Liefeld suggests a combination view. We should take Jesus’ words, “It is enough,” at face value; he is referring to their two swords.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ It is true that at times Jesus uses something evil to illustrate good, but in those cases evil is clearly identified. In the Parable of the Unrighteous Steward Jesus calls the steward unrighteous (Luke 16:8), and in the Parable of the Unjust Judge the judge is clearly unrighteous (18:2, 4).

⁵⁷ Walter L. Liefeld, “Luke,” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 8: 1029.

⁵⁸ “Case closed! They mean well, but there is no getting through their skulls this night” (Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age*, rev. and expanded ed. [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988], 353).

⁵⁹ The Greek seems to back this up; the word *ικανός* means sufficient, adequate, or enough (BDAG, 472). The Polish translators of *The Holy Bible: New Translation* (Warsaw: British and Foreign Bible

However, Jesus might still be speaking symbolically. First, if he literally means for his disciples to defend themselves with swords this night, then why does he later rebuke Peter for doing so? Second, he doesn't actually make them buy more swords than they actually have (v. 38), and two swords hardly seem enough to defend their group.⁶⁰ Finally, whereas before Jesus sent them out without money belt, bag, and sandals and they lacked nothing (v. 35; cf. 10:4), now things would be different: the Jesus they follow will now be "numbered with transgressors" (v. 37; cf. Isa 53:12). Thus, "the swords may simply be a vivid symbol of impending crisis, not intended for actual use."⁶¹

John 2:13–17 (Matt 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46)

All four gospels record Jesus cleansing the temple.⁶² But only in John's account does Jesus wield a weapon—"a scourge of cords"—as he drives the animal merchants and money changers out of the temple (John 2:15). Does Jesus commit an act of

Society, 1975) agree, choosing the word "Wystarczy" ("It's sufficient") over the word "Dosyć" ("Enough already!"). If Jesus meant the latter, he could have said, "No more of this" (ἐἴτε ἔως τούτου), as he did later in the garden (Luke 22:51).

⁶⁰ Liefeld, "Luke," 1029–30.

⁶¹ Ibid., 1030. Danker suggests that since Jesus and his disciples are about to be counted outlaws; "let us look the part," says Jesus, by carrying actual swords. Danker calls this "a prophetic maneuver, the saving grace of humor in the face of irresistible power" (*Jesus and the New Age*, 353). This may be a stretch. Jesus certainly does not want them *playing* the part of outlaws later in the garden when he not only rebukes Peter for pulling his sword, but asks the arresting crowd with a touch of irony, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber?" (v. 52).

⁶² The Synoptic Gospels place a cleansing during the Passion Week, while John puts one at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. For a discussion of the issues and the solution of two cleansings see Carson, "Matthew," 441.

aggression here, physically striking these people? Some might argue that Jesus only uses the scourge on the animals. Some animal lovers might not even like that. However, the direct object “them” of the verb “drove” (ἐξέβαλεν) is masculine (πάντας), more likely referring to the sellers and changers of v. 14, whom He drives out “with the sheep and the oxen” (v. 15, emphasis added). If only the animals were meant, πάντα would have been more natural.⁶³

But even if Jesus “drove” these people out, can we prove he “struck” them with the scourge? No, we can’t. He may not have had to. Driving out the livestock and overturning the money tables may have been enough to get everyone moving. But what if Jesus *did* strike someone? Would this have violated his teaching against resisting evil in the Sermon on the Mount? No, I don’t believe so. The teaching is against taking personal vengeance when wronged. Jesus is not doing that here. It is zeal for his Father’s house that moves him to action, not a personal vendetta (John 2:17; cf. Matt 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46).⁶⁴

John 6:15

All four gospels record the feeding of the 5,000 (Matt 14:15–21; Mark 6:35–44; Luke 9:12–17; John 6:5–15). However, John alone adds the people’s reaction to the miracle, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world” (John 6:14; cf. Deut 18:15). Then “Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone” (v. 15). Jesus did not permit this because he did not come to deliver the nation by force from their Roman oppressors, but to die on the cross for their sins. Jesus did not come the first time to raise an army but to save a

⁶³ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According To St. John* (London: S.P.C.K., 1958), 165; and Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 194n63.

⁶⁴ Similarly, regarding parenting the Bible upholds corporal punishment even as it forbids sinful anger and abuse.

people.⁶⁵ But one day Jesus *will* come again as conquering King to destroy his enemies and establish his kingdom.

John 8:1–11

While not about war, this passage concerns the related topic of violence and capital punishment.⁶⁶ The scribes and Pharisees bring Jesus a woman caught in adultery and challenge him thus, “Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?” This is clearly an attempt to trap Jesus (v. 6), similar to the situation discussed above in Matthew 22:15–22. Will Jesus command them to stone her, putting him at odds with the Romans who alone reserve the right to carry out the death penalty? Or will Jesus command them not to stone her, putting him at odds with Moses?⁶⁷ But “Jesus refuse[s] to be impaled on either horn of the dilemma.”⁶⁸ He deftly cuts their Gordian knot by calling for anyone sinless to cast the first stone.

⁶⁵ “When he himself, on more than one occasion, had the opportunity of leading a militant force he refused to do so, and lost many followers by his refusal” (Bruce, *NT History*, 180).

⁶⁶ Again, textual problems compel us to consider the possibility that this passage is not original with John. The NASB places it in brackets and the NIV sets it off from the surrounding text with horizontal lines, adding, “The earliest and most reliable manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53–8:11.” On the other hand, Carson says “there is little reason for doubting that the event here described occurred, even if in its written form it did not in the beginning belong to the canonical books” (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* [Leicester, U.K.: IVP; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 333). Thus I assume its authenticity for this discussion.

⁶⁷ The Law prescribed stoning for a betrothed (Deut 22:24) or married (v. 22; Lev 20:10) woman. When Judea became a Roman province Rome withdrew from the Jewish authorities the right to inflict capital punishment (cf. John 18:31) (Bruce, *NT History*, 181).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Some hold that by “without sin” Jesus refers only to the sin of adultery.⁶⁹ Others, on the basis of the generic word ἀναμάρτητος, believe that Jesus means without any sin.⁷⁰ Either way their sin disqualifies them from stoning her and they all leave (John 8:9). Jesus does not condemn the woman either, but she must go and sin no more (v. 11). In a sense Jesus upholds the Law because he calls for stones to be cast. But by disqualifying these Jews from carrying out the sentence Jesus does not cross the Roman authorities. Finally, while Jesus does not condemn the woman, neither does he excuse her sin. The passage is in keeping with what we have already seen. During his earthly ministry Jesus refuses to side with the Zealots to forcefully overthrow Rome’s authority. Jesus’ treatment of the woman is also in keeping with the purpose of his first coming: not to judge or destroy but to show mercy and offer salvation.

John 14:27

John 14:27 is another reference connecting peace to the followers of Jesus. Similar to what we saw in several other passages, this one speaks of being at peace in one’s heart because of one’s secure relationship with the Lord. In the Upper Room discourse Jesus is giving final instructions and encouragement to his disciples before he leaves them and returns to the Father. He leaves with them peace, but not as the world gives (John 14:27a). The world cannot give the deep and lasting peace that comes when one is right with God and one’s future is secure in him. For this reason the disciples should not let their hearts be troubled or fearful (v. 27b). They need not be troubled because of their faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 1). Their futures are forever secure because Christ

⁶⁹ E.g., Carson, *John*, 336.

⁷⁰ E.g., Morris, *John*, 889n24. I prefer this interpretation because of the general word as well as the result: *everyone* went away. Was *everyone* there guilty of the physical act of adultery and thus disqualified?

goes to prepare a place for them, and he will come again to receive them to himself that they might be where he is (vv. 2–3).

John 16:33

This passage likewise speaks of peace for the followers of Jesus. It continues the same theme as the previous passage, coming as it does later in the same discourse. It is in the Lord Jesus Christ that his followers have peace (John 16:33a). This peace is ours in spite of life's circumstances and the tribulations we will certainly face in this world because Jesus Christ himself has overcome the world (v. 33b). So the peace Jesus speaks of here does not mean a total lack of trouble or conflict in this world. All who live a godly life will be persecuted (2 Tim 3:12). We are, however, as individual believers to be at peace with all men as much as it depends on us (Rom 12:18). But nothing can touch the peace we enjoy with God in Christ.

John 18:36

Here Jesus makes an interesting reference to fighting. In the context of Pilate's question, "Are You the King of the Jews?" (John 18:33). Jesus answers, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm" (v. 36). This account follows the arrest of Jesus earlier in the same chapter. There Jesus commanded Peter to put up his sword because Jesus must drink the cup given to him by the Father (v. 11). Jesus' followers do not fight to save him because Jesus has come to die as Savior of the world, not to raise an earthly army and wrest control of the Jewish nation. But when Jesus comes again a *heavenly* army not of this world *will* accompany him to conquer his enemies and set up the Millennial Kingdom (Rev 19:11–21).

John 19:11

This passage does not speak directly of violence or war, but like Matthew 22:15–22 it deals with the related subject of governmental authority and the believer. Afraid of what the

Jews were saying about Jesus and frustrated by Jesus' refusal to answer him (John 19:6-9), Pilate says to Jesus, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" (v. 10). Jesus responds that Pilate would have no authority over him unless it had been given to him from God (v. 11a). Jesus is not approving of Pilate's abuse of authority here. As a matter of fact, Jesus' response only highlight's Pilate's misuse of his position: God gives governors like Pilate authority *to do justly*.⁷¹ Later Peter will accuse the Jews of putting Jesus to death "by the hands of godless men" (Acts 2:23). Herod *and* Pilate, the Gentiles *and* the people of Israel conspired *together* to put Jesus to death (Acts 4:27). Pilate *and* the Jews abuse their authority in this account and act unjustly toward Jesus.⁷² But Jesus is not denying Pilate's authority altogether. Pilate has the governmental authority granted him by God (John 19:11).⁷³ Other passages acknowledge

⁷¹ "If [Pilate] had the authority to release Jesus, whom he had already pronounced innocent, why did he not exercise it? Theoretically he had the power; practically he was bound by his own sins and by the political commitments he had made" (Merrill C. Tenney, *John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948], 264).

⁷² Jesus does say that the one who delivered him to Pilate committed the greater sin (John 19:11b). This is because the Jews took the initiative in actively and unjustly handing Jesus over to Pilate. *They* in essence killed Jesus "by the hands of godless men" (Acts 2:23). Jesus' singular reference, "he who handed me over," may be a reference to Caiaphas, who as high priest presided over the Sanhedrin. He is the one who took an active if not determinative role in the plot to kill Jesus (John 11:49-53) and in the formulation of the charges against him (Mark 14:61-64) (Carson, *John*, 601).

⁷³ A final question in John 19:11 is what Jesus means by "it" when he says, "You would have no authority over Me, unless *it* had been given to you from above." In English it seems clearly to refer to Pilate's authority over Jesus, but Carson argues against this on the basis of the Greek. The word "authority" here (ἐξουσίαν) is feminine while the phrase "it had been given" (ἣν δεδομένον) is neuter. In Carson's view, then, the antecedent of "it" cannot be "authority." In Carson's view "what is given to Pilate is the entire turn of events, or, more precisely,

this authority over all people including believers, which includes bearing the sword to punish evildoers (Rom 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:13–14). Jesus does not deny this legitimate and God-ordained governmental authority in this or any other passage.

We now move out of the gospels and their direct quotations of Jesus and narratives connecting him in various ways to the subject of war during his earthly life. But we must include the following NT passages because they bear further scriptural testimony regarding Jesus and war. They complete what Scripture says on the subject and provide a balanced and full picture of Jesus and war. This would be lacking if we only considered the gospels' testimony on the subject.

Colossians 2:15

This verse describes how Jesus was victorious in battle over the powers of darkness when he died on the cross for our sins. This marked a culminating point in the spiritual warfare Jesus

the event of the betrayal itself.... Pilate would not have had judicial authority over Jesus unless the event of the betrayal itself had been given to him *from above*" (Carson, *John*, 601–2; emphasis original). But this seems to go against the natural understanding of Jesus' words. A better way is to see the neuter as referring generally to the concept of Pilate's having governing authority from God. Elsewhere the NT uses the neuter to refer to a conceptual antecedent (see examples in Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 333–35). In other words, not just his authority over Jesus, to free him or to crucify him, but all of Pilate's—and by extension Rome's—governing authority comes from God. Barrett likewise considers the sense here to be that "the Roman authority in general is of divine appointment and consent" (*John*, 452). This is why Jesus says that the one who delivered him to Pilate has the greater sin. "Pilate, however wrongly he may be destined to use the power vested in him, is exercising a power legitimately entrusted to him, while the person who handed Jesus over to him is illegally using the secular power of Rome to obtain an unjust sentence against Jesus" (R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According To St. John*, TynNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965], 204). In acknowledging Rome's God-granted governing authority here, Jesus does not exclude, and can be taken to include, its authority to wield the sword.

waged against Satan's forces during his earthly ministry. At the cross Christ gained victory over these powers first by disarming them. Their strength has been neutralized. In a similar way the writer of Hebrews describes how through his death Jesus rendered powerless "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14). Second, Christ made a public example of them. They have been exposed for what they are: enemies of God who are opposed to his will in the world. Third, Christ triumphed over them. Ironically the seeming defeat of Jesus by death proved to be the very demise of the forces of darkness. Of course the final and permanent victory over Satan and the spiritual forces of evil is yet future; nevertheless, their doom has already been assured.⁷⁴

2 Thessalonians 1:7–9, 2:8

Here we consider a passage from Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians. Earlier Paul wrote his first letter to them in part to address confusion and discouragement on the part of the believers regarding the return of the Lord and the relationship of those who had died to it.⁷⁵ Now Paul writes 2 Thessalonians in part because increased suffering and persecutions have convinced some that they were already in the end time.⁷⁶ As far as their afflictions and persecutions go, Paul commends them for their perseverance and faith and reminds them that they are suffering for the kingdom to be considered worthy of it (2 Thess 1:4–5). Paul then assures them that God *will* mete out his justice on their enemies in his good time, "when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God.... These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (vv. 7–9).

⁷⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 667–68.

⁷⁵ Robert L. Thomas, "1, 2 Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11: 233.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 304.

As for their already being in the end time—the “day of the Lord” (2:2) or Great Tribulation—it is impossible, for that day will not come before two key events: “the apostasy” and the revelation of “the man of lawlessness” (v. 3). Paul then describes the actions the Antichrist will take and the Lord’s judgment upon him: “the Lord will slay [him] with the breath of His mouth and bring [him] to an end by the appearance of His coming” (v. 8). In this passage Paul reminds believers, in accordance with OT prophecy and Jesus’ own predictions preserved in the gospels, that when Jesus comes again to this earth he *will* bear the sword to bring destruction to his enemies, including the antichrist, that great enemy of the Tribulation Period.

Hebrews 12:2–3

Twice in these verses the writer of Hebrews says that Jesus endured his suffering: he endured the cross and despised the shame (Heb 12:2); and he endured the hostility of sinners against himself (v. 3). The verb translated “endure” (ὑπομένω) has the idea of maintaining one’s belief or course of action, or standing one’s ground, in the face of opposition.⁷⁷ In the case of Christ here it means simply that he submitted to the crucifixion and bore its suffering.⁷⁸ Christ bore the cross as well as much hostility leading up to it: mocking, spitting, slapping, beating, and scourging (Matt 26:67, 27:30–31; Mark 14:65, 15:19–20; Luke 22:63; John 18:22, 19:1–3). The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus bore this suffering “for the joy set before Him” and having endured it “has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2). Jesus knew he was giving his life for the salvation of many and that his Father would vindicate him and glorify him for his obedient suffering. The readers of Hebrews are to fix their eyes on Jesus (v. 2) and consider his example so that they will not grow weary and lost heart (v. 3). They had endured material loss and persecution (10:32–34) and now are

⁷⁷ BDAG, 1039.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

in need of endurance (v. 36) as they run the race set before them (12:1).

1 Peter 2:21–23

In this letter Peter exhorts believers to keep a good testimony in the midst of suffering and persecution (1 Pet 2:12, 19–20). He offers Christ as one who suffered for us, leaving an example for us to follow (v. 21). Peter then quotes a portion of Isaiah 53:9 to say that Christ “committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth” (v. 22). Peter adds, “and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously” (v. 23). Peter is describing here the quiet endurance of Christ’s suffering predicted in Isaiah 53 and preserved in the gospels. Peter then adds the *purpose* of Christ’s suffering: “and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (v. 24; cf. Isa 53:5). Christ patiently bore the suffering of the cross in order to bear our sins and purchase our salvation. Peter does offer the suffering of Christ as an example for believers to follow. We do not suffer and die to pay for anyone’s sins like Christ. Rather, like Christ we must patiently bear suffering and persecution for our faith, “not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead” (3:9). Like Christ, we too must not strike back with vengeance when wronged, but patiently bear suffering for the sake of our testimony and witness for the Lord (vv. 13–17).

Revelation 1:16; 2:12, 16

Three times in Revelation 1–2 John refers to a sword in the mouth of the glorified Christ. In his opening vision, John describes Christ in part as having a sharp two-edged sword coming out of his mouth (1:16). In the letter to the church in Pergamum Jesus identifies himself as “the One who has the sharp two-edged sword” (2:12). This is because the church is tolerating corrupt leaders who are promoting idolatry and immorality (v. 14). Jesus exhorts the church to repent or he will

come and “make war against them with the sword of My mouth” (v. 16). The call to repent is to the whole congregation for tolerating the error, and the special threat is against the heretics themselves.⁷⁹ Christ will come quickly to slay them in judgment.

Revelation 19:11–19

The climax of Revelation and indeed all of Scripture is the second coming of Christ in chapter 19. The imagery of warfare is prominent: Christ rides a white horse, coming in righteousness to judge and wage war (v. 11). His eyes are flames of fire and on his head are many diadems (v. 12). He wears a robe dipped in blood (v. 13; cf. Isa 63:1–6). The armies of heaven follow him on white horses (v. 14). “From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty” (v. 15; cf. Isa 11:4; Ps 2:9; Isa 63:3). When Jesus comes again it will be as Warrior-Messiah and King!⁸⁰

Then an angel calls for all the birds of heaven to come and assemble themselves “for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great” (vv. 17–18). When the kings and armies of the earth assemble to make war against Christ and his heavenly army, the beast and false prophet are seized and “thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone” (v. 20), “and the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth

⁷⁹ Alan F. Johnson, “Revelation,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12: 441–42.

⁸⁰ As Mounce says, “This representation of the Messiah is not at variance with NT teaching. In 2 Thessalonians 1:7–8 Paul teaches that the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire to inflict vengeance upon the wicked. In Matthew 25:41 Jesus commands the cursed to depart into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], 343).

of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh” (v. 21). The sword of Jesus Christ stands quite clearly for the slaying of Christ’s enemies when He comes to establish his Millennial Kingdom on earth (20:4–6).

ANALYSIS OF POSITIONS

When it comes to Christian views on war, scholars suggest various schemes of differentiation. For example, Geisler suggest three main positions: Activism (war is always right); Pacifism (war is never right); and Selectivism (war is sometimes right).⁸¹ The multiple views book edited by Clouse proposes four: Nonresistance (don’t oppose war but don’t participate in it); Christian Pacifism (oppose war); Just War (war as national defense justified); and Crusade or Preventive War (not only war as national defense but war as preventive attack also justified).⁸² However, the line between nonresistance and pacifism is a bit blurry in this book. The editor contributes to this lack of clarity by defining the four views as: “Christian pacifism *or* nonresistance, the just war and the crusade.”⁸³ So is it four views or three? For this reason the Feinbergs interact with just three views: Christian Pacifism, Just War Theory, and Crusade or Preventive War Theory.⁸⁴ But even in the case of the just war and preventive war theories, the differences are slight; both hold the basic position that some wars are just.

Therefore, for simplicity of discussion I will work with just two viewpoints along the lines of Geisler’s second and third categories and the Feinbergs’ first two: Christian Pacifism (war

⁸¹ Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 215–38.

⁸² Robert G. Clouse, ed., *War: Four Christian Views* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1981).

⁸³ Clouse, “Introduction,” in *Four Views*, 25; emphasis added.

⁸⁴ John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1993), 349–67 [CD-ROM]; in Logos Bible Software.

is never right); and Just War (war is sometimes right).⁸⁵ How do proponents of these opposing views use the teachings of Jesus to support their position and counter the other?

Christian Pacifism

Christian pacifists find important support for their position in the teaching and example of Jesus.⁸⁶ Because divine revelation finds its culmination in Jesus Christ in the NT, the Christian should get his attitude toward war from the NT and in particular from the teachings of Jesus. Drawing from the chapters on nonresistance and Christian pacifism from the *Four Views* book, the Feinbergs summarize the areas of argumentation. Jesus blessed the peacemakers (Matt 5:9), commanded his disciples to put up the sword (26:52), and told us to love our enemies and to do good to those who hate us (Luke 6:27–36).⁸⁷ Furthermore and closely related to the previous, the Sermon on the Mount—in particular Matthew 5:38–48—prescribes the appropriate conduct for all Christians

⁸⁵ A recently proposed mediating position between pacifism and just war is just peacemaking. Because of time and space restraints I will not deal with it here, although it warrants serious examination. Briefly, the just peacemaking movement offers itself as a “third paradigm for the ethics of peace and war.” It tries to bring both Christian pacifists and just war proponents together to “develop effective war-preventing practices.... In the wake of the threat of terrorism, thoughtful persons are sensing that it is not enough to debate whether it is right or wrong to make war; we need to focus on effective ways to prevent terrorism and war” (Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003], 169).

⁸⁶ Geisler calls the Sermon on the Mount “the pacifist’s stronghold” (*Christian Ethics*, 230).

⁸⁷ Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics*, 350. For these points see Herman A. Hoyt, “Nonresistance,” in *Four Views*, 34–44, and Myron S. Augsburger, “Christian Pacifism,” in *Four Views*, 86–87.

at all times.⁸⁸ For Christian pacifists killing is always wrong because Jesus commands “do not resist an evil person” (Matt 5:39a). Similarly, resisting evil with force is always wrong based on the commands to turn the other cheek and go the extra mile (Matt 5:39b–40).⁸⁹ Next, the cross has ethical implications: Christ suffered injustice without striking back as an example to us; and since Christ died for everyone we must never take the life of someone for whom Christ died.⁹⁰ Finally, a basic premise of pacifism is that there is no real distinction between what a Christian should do as a private individual and what he should do in a public capacity.⁹¹

For the Feinbergs the last point about private versus public duties in relation to Jesus’ teachings is an important one for Christian non-pacifists. The Feinbergs argue that a fundamental problem with pacifist interpretations of Jesus’ teachings is the failure to distinguish between private and public duties, personal duties, and duties of a state. As a private individual I may turn the other cheek when unjustly attacked. However, my responsibilities are quite different when I stand in the position of a guardian of a third party as a civil magistrate or parent. Because I am responsible for their lives and welfare, I must resist, even with force, unjust aggression against them. Moreover, loving my neighbor or enemy does not mean I must stand idly by as my child is kidnapped and murdered. I am to use whatever force is necessary to protect his or her life and safety. The state stands in this third party relationship to its citizens. Texts that pacifists typically cite for nonresistance are

⁸⁸ Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics*, 351. See Hoyt, “Nonresistance,” 35–36, and Augsburg, “Christian Pacifism,” 82.

⁸⁹ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 222–23.

⁹⁰ Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics*, 351. See Augsburg, “Christian Pacifism,” 91–92.

⁹¹ Geisler also makes this point in *Christian Ethics*, 223.

verses that have to do with private or personal duties, not public duties.⁹²

Geisler responds similarly, adding the point that Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is not pacifistic, but rather antiretaliatory. Jesus condemns the militant activity promoted by the Zealots as well as personal retaliation against those who do evil to us.⁹³ I believe these arguments are valid in light of the above study of relevant gospel passages. Jesus set the example as one who would not use violence to overthrow the governing Roman authorities, nor would he allow his followers to do so. Furthermore, Jesus taught his followers not to use force or violence in carrying out their gospel ministry. Finally, Jesus taught his followers not to strike back in vengeance against evil done to them. This accords with other NT teaching that believers must never pay back evil for evil to anyone (Rom 12:17) and never take their own revenge, but leave room for God's wrath (v. 19). Striking back with vengeance against insult and persecution is not the same as self-preservation or the defense of one's loved ones and country.

What about the ethical implications of the cross? The cross of Christ demonstrates God's justice in punishing sin and not just Christ's exemplary behavior. "The pacifist's use of the cross focuses on the exemplary character of Christ's actions and death but neglects the penal, substitutionary nature of his death."⁹⁴ I would add what we saw above both in the prophecies of the Messiah's suffering in Isaiah 53 and in the NT descriptions of that event. The purpose of Christ's first coming as the Sacrificial Lamb *precluded* his using force against his enemies, but the purpose of his second coming as Judge and King will *demand* it. As far as taking the life of one for whom Christ died, the Feinbergs' response is to the point: "If Christ's death for the sins of all rules out any ultimate form of punishment, then not even God himself can justly send unrepentant sinners to eternal

⁹² Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics*, 356.

⁹³ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 230.

⁹⁴ Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics*, 357.

punishment.”⁹⁵ But we know this is not the case. Just as the God who inflicts wrath will be righteous in his judgment of the world (Rom 3:5–6), so also the divinely sanctioned human government is righteous when it inflicts wrath against evildoers (13:4).

Just War

Christian proponents of just war likewise see support for their position in the teachings of Jesus.⁹⁶ Geisler goes right for the jugular: “Jesus recognized that Pilate had God-given authority over his life. When Pilate said to him, ‘Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or crucify you?’ he replied, ‘You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above’ (John 19:10–11).”⁹⁷ As discussed earlier (especially in footnote 73), it is not so clear cut what “it” refers to in v. 11. Geisler thinks it refers to Pilate’s authority over Jesus’ life. I argued that it refers to Pilate’s governing authority in general. That said, I don’t think we can exclude from Jesus’ statement Rome’s authority to wield the sword, and I think we can include it on the basis of passages like Romans 13:1–7 and 1 Peter 2:13–14.⁹⁸ In other words, if Scripture generally upholds

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ The purpose of this paper is not to spell out just war theory and what constitutes a just war. For some representative presentations on the theory see, for example, Arthur F. Holmes, “The Just War,” in *Four Views*, 120–22; Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 233–35; Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics*, 361–65. See also Mike Stallard, “Is There Such a Thing as a Just War?” (paper presented in chapel as part of the Faculty Forum series at Baptist Bible Seminary, Clarks Summit, PA., 24 January 2002).

⁹⁷ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 232.

⁹⁸ I acknowledge with Holmes that Romans 13:1–7 “pertains directly to matters of criminal justice and the civil order and only by extrapolation to international conflict. But it does make clear that for some purposes, the precise scope of which is not defined, government has the right to use lethal force. The context concerns the law of love with its repudiation of vengeful action, its concern for those who

the God-given authority of human governments to wield the sword against evildoers, Jesus would not and could not deny that right in his teaching. So while I don't agree with Geisler that Jesus *explicitly* acknowledges Pilate's authority over his life in John 19:11, I do think Jesus implies it by recognizing generally Pilate's God-given governing authority.

What other passages relating to Jesus might support the just war view? The Feinbergs mention Luke 7:9 (dealt with above under Matt 8:5–13) and the fact that Jesus praises the Roman centurion for his exemplary faith. "Nowhere is there any suggestion that he should resign from military service."⁹⁹ Some might claim that this is an argument from silence and therefore weak, but I believe it is noteworthy that Jesus does not disapprove of the centurion's occupation as a soldier. This may indicate his tacit approval of governments' right to rule and wield the sword.

A similar argument might be made from Luke 14:31–32, where Jesus uses warring armies as an example of counting the cost. I acknowledged earlier that this passage is illustrative; Jesus' point is not to teach us how to fight wars. Even so, Jesus *could* be understood as implicitly recognizing the reality *and* legitimacy of warfare in a fallen world. It is hard to think Jesus would use something intrinsically evil as an illustration of discipleship without some explanation. A related passage is Matthew 22:7, which although illustrative as part of a parable may likewise reflect Jesus' attitude toward war. The king in the parable sends his armies to destroy those who murdered his servants. Jesus seems to approve of the king's actions: the king's subjects killed his servants unjustly, and therefore he was justified to destroy "those murders and set their city on fire." In the parable before this one, a landowner punishes those who killed his servants and his son (21:33–41). Jesus' application is

suffer, including one's enemies, and its pursuit of peace. Any use of force, then, must be kept within these limits: it can be neither vengeful nor vicious, it must be merciful, and it must seek a just peace for all concerned" (Holmes, "Just War," 122).

⁹⁹ Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics*, 365.

that God will do the same regarding his kingdom (vv. 42–44). In both these parables Jesus speaks of kings and others in authority justly punishing evildoers. In both cases this stands for the just punishment that Christ will one day inflict on his enemies.

How does the just war position handle Jesus' teachings that seem to point away from violence and killing? I have already addressed this above in response to the Christian pacifist's use of such passages. Here I will just add a concise and, I believe, accurate answer given by Holmes in his defense of just war. Holmes acknowledges that the NT does not address the use of military force as clearly as the OT does. The moral teachings of the NT generally address individuals and churches more than governments and rulers. More to the point, Jesus' teaching, for example that Peter must put up his sword (John 18:11) and that his followers must not resist evil (Matt 5:38–48), has to be understood in the context of what Romans 13 and analogous passages teach. Whatever broader application Jesus' words to Peter may have, plainly they do not deny to government all uses of the sword. The NT does teach individuals not to use violence, and Peter was forbidden its use in religious causes (see also John 18:36).¹⁰⁰

One final argument in favor of just war is Jesus' own role as Warrior King. Here I must strongly disagree with Holmes when he makes the absolute claim, "War is evil."¹⁰¹ Yes, evil *is* the reason any war must be fought. Yes, many wars fought by men *have* been evil. But it *cannot* be categorically true that war is intrinsically evil. If war is evil on principle, then how could a good and just God command and help Israel to take the promised land by warfare? And if war is evil by definition, then how could both testaments prophesy of a good and righteous Messiah coming to slay his enemies in war? As Paul puts it in Romans 3:5–6, if the God who inflicts wrath is unrighteous, then how will he judge the world? While it is true that evil necessitates war, the defeat of evil by just war is not of itself evil,

¹⁰⁰ Holmes, "Just War," 123.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

whether done by divinely-sanctioned governments now or by Christ when he comes again.

CONCLUSION

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 8b says, “There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven A time for war and a time for peace.” In this paper I have tried to take an inclusive look at Jesus and war in Scripture. We cannot judge Jesus’ relationship to war on the gospel accounts and teachings alone. An all-encompassing study of Jesus from the whole Bible shows him to be the Prince of Peace *and* the Warrior King.

The OT predicts a Messiah of peace *and* war. He will provide everlasting peace for God’s people. He will come humbly, bringing salvation (Zech 9:9–10). He will come as a suffering Servant and a silent Lamb, sacrificing himself for the peace of many (Isa 53:5–6). He will usher in a kingdom of peace for his people that will never end (Isa 9:6–7). But to bring comprehensive and permanent peace will require war. He will destroy his enemies to provide his people with lasting peace. He will crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15), shatter the nations like earthenware (Ps 2:9), and slay the wicked with the breath of his lips (Isa 11:4). This is the total picture of the Messiah’s predicted work in the OT. He will not be just a sacrificial lamb or just a conquering warrior king; he will be both.

We must likewise take a full look at Jesus and war in the NT. The very purpose of his first coming required that he silently and passively accept suffering and death at the hands of wicked men. He came the first time to die for sinful people, not to destroy them. He taught his followers not to take vengeance or pay back evil for evil in their personal lives, but to do good to their persecutors. They must not use violence in their work of gospel ministry or seek to overthrow the governing authorities. They must be promoters of peace and preachers of the Prince of Peace. These instructions concern the private lives and gospel ministries of Christ’s followers; they do not deal with our public and civic obligations. Scripture teaches the divinely-sanctioned

right of government to wield the sword against evildoers. Jesus did not contravene that principle. He supported it.

Finally, Jesus is not a pacifist by principle. Even during His earthly ministry he did battle with the spiritual forces of darkness and triumphed over them through his death (Col 2:15; Heb 2:14). When he comes again to set up his everlasting kingdom, he will do so as the conquering Warrior King. He will deal out retribution to the enemies of God (2 Thess 1:8–9) and slay the antichrist with the breath of his mouth (2:8). He will destroy the armies of the earth assembled against him (Rev 19:15, 21), destroy the beast and the false prophet (v. 20), and cast Satan into the abyss (20:3). Then he will reign in his Millennial Kingdom and all his saints with him (vv. 4–6). This reign of peace will last forever (22:5). Jesus is a Lamb. Jesus is a Warrior. Jesus brings war. Jesus brings peace. There is a time for peace. There is a time for war. Sometimes war is the only way to bring peace. This has been true in the past; it is true now; and it will be true when Jesus returns.

The Biblical Basis for Multiethnic Churches and Ministry

*Rev. Ken Davis
Director of Project Jerusalem
Baptist Bible Seminar,
Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania*

Over the next fifty years, the white population is projected to decrease by 30 percent, while other ethnic groups will increase 92 percent. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, by the year 2042 ethnic “people of color” will collectively be in a majority in our land. With no one ethnic group in a majority, whites will be the largest minority in a nation of minorities. By mid-century our minority population—everyone except for non-Hispanic, single-race whites—is projected to be 235.7 million out of a total U.S. population of 439 million. By 2050, the Hispanic population is projected to nearly triple to 132.8 million (from 15% to 30% of our population). Our black population will have increased to 65.7 million (from 14% to 15% of our people); Asian-American North America is populated by a wondrous variety of people, nearly all of whom are immigrants. And in recent decades more and diverse kinds of immigrants have arrived on our shores. The metaphor that America is a melting pot for all the world’s ethnic groups has become passe. A better analogy is to see our nation as a giant salad bowl or stew pot in which each cultural component retains its own integrity and identity, yet contributes to the overall national flavor.

Immigration and rising birth rates have brought tremendous change to American society. America’s total ethnic population now numbers over 110 million.¹ The nation’s streets

¹ The 2008 U.S. Census Bureau updates to actual 2000 census data reveal that our total ethnic population now includes an estimated 46.7 million Hispanics, 41.1 million African Americans, 15.5 million Asian Americans, 4.9 million Native Americans and Alaskan Natives, 1.1 million Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, and 5.2 million Americans who

teem with over 500 ethnic groups speaking more than 630 languages and dialects.² Multiculturalism in America is now an established fact.³ population to 40.6 million (from 5.1% to 9.2%); Native Americans and Alaska Natives to 8.6 million (from 1.6% to 2%); and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders more than doubled to 2.6 million. By 2050, the number of people who identify themselves as being of two or more “races” is projected to more than triple, from 5.2 million to 16.2 million.⁴ According to some projections, 21% of Americans will

count themselves as “multiracial.” This actually adds up to *114.5 million ethnic Americans, which is 37.4%* of our estimated 2008 population of 306 million! This means that roughly one third of American residents are “minority” or “people of color.” To put this in perspective, there are more minorities in this country than there were people in the U.S. in 1910. In fact minority population in the U.S. is larger than the total population of all but 11 countries.

² Oscar I. Romo, *American Mosaic: Church Planting in Ethnic America* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 44.

³ This *fact* of demographic multiculturalism must be carefully distinguished from the relativistic *ideology* that goes by the same name and is seeking to transform America’s educational and political institutions. Conservative Christians can accept the first while rejecting the second.

⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census, “An Older and More Diverse Nation by Midcentury,” 14 August 2008, <<http://www.census.gov/PressRelease/www/releases/archives/population/012496.html>> (accessed 26 August 2008). Other Census releases (such as 8/09/07) estimate more than 300 counties are now “majority-minority.” That is, nearly one in every 10 of the nation’s 3,141 counties has a population that is more than 50% minority. Los Angeles County, CA, for example, has the largest minority population with 7 million or 71% of its total. Their ethnic population is actually higher than the total population of 38 states. Majority-minority status is a growing reality in some states as well. For example, California’s population is now predominately “minority” – Hispanics, African Americans, Asians and “mixed” groups now comprise over 50% of the state’s population. This is also currently true

be claiming mixed ancestry by midcentury.⁵ Truly, we are a nation that is “browning.”⁶

OLD TESTAMENT FOUNDATIONS

The foundation for multiethnic ministry and church planting can legitimately begin where the Scriptures begin. Beginning with the Genesis accounts of creation, the Old Testament progressively reveals a God who loves and values both unity and diversity. Five theological principles emerge from a careful study of the older testament.⁷

First, **the human race is one**. All the diverse peoples of earth belong to one family. God’s singular act of creating male and female progenitors of all peoples is foundational to our theology (Gen. 1-2). Jehovah God is the **God of Creation**. That the “nations” (or “peoples”) are all part of created humanity is confirmed by the ancient song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32: “When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when

in Arizona, New Mexico, Hawaii, and the District of Columbia. Texas will be predominately minority by 2010.

⁵ Martin Kasindorf and Haya El Nasser, “Impact of Census’ Race Data Debated,” *USA Today*, 13 March 2001.

⁶ The 2000 Census for the first time gave people the opportunity to choose more than one race to describe themselves, and 2.4% of the country’s 281.4 million citizens did so. Multiracial or mixed race Americans currently number at least 6.8 million (not all choose to identify as such to census workers). As this “blending of America” continues, racial lines may blur until the “melting pot” becomes a harmonious “we-are-the-world” reality. The U.S. is mestizing, that is to say, we are a “browning” nation which is shifting rapidly toward being a polyglot of brown, yellow, black, white, and mestizo (mixed).

⁷ For a fuller discussion of the progressive unveiling of a theology of ethnicity in the OT, see the author’s article, “Building a Biblical Theology of Ethnicity for Global Mission,” *The Journal of Ministry and Theology*, vol.7, no. 2, (Fall 2003): 91-126.

he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples” (32:8).⁸ God’s rule over the nations,⁹ a reality amply affirmed in the OT, is simply a function of the fact that he created them in the first place. Since He is the creator of humankind we are all His offspring. Since we are His offspring by creation, every human being is our brother and sister. Furthermore, we are all made in His divine image. Being equally created by Him and like Him, we are equal in His sight in worth and dignity, and thus have an equal right to respect and justice. If God has made us all from one set of original parents (see Acts 17:26 cf. also Rom. 2:29-30), then no individual or “race” may consider itself above others. This truth of unified origin should restrain the temptation to boast in ethnic uniqueness as well as keep us from ethnocentrism and racism, both, properly seen, forms of idolatry – lifting ourselves or our ethnic group above the true God.¹⁰

⁸ Paul later draws from the language of this very OT text when he speaks as a Jew to Gentiles in an evangelistic context at Mars Hill in Athens: “From one man he made every nation [*ethnos*=people group] of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live” (Acts 17:26). In this classic text and the verses that follow, it is noteworthy, Paul takes for granted the diversity of nations within the unity of humanity and attributes it to the Creator and his world-governing providence.

⁹ In this paper, I use the term “nations” in a broad people-group sense, as commonly used in the OT, not in the more restricted sense of “nation-state” that developed in post-Reformation Europe. For a good discussion of ancient Near Eastern and biblical concepts of nationhood in relation to ethnicity, language, kinship, territory, etc., see Daniel Block, “Nations/Nationality,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. William A. VanGemeren (Carlisle, U.K.: Paternoster, 1996).

¹⁰ Both the OT biblical understanding of creation in the image of God and the NT gospel radically undermine any racist assumptions. For a fine biblical discussion of this issue see J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

From the early Genesis record we see a second and balancing theological principle emerge: **the diversification of peoples is good**. The whole creation witnesses to the fact that God enjoys diversity, and different ethnic groups are but one expression of this divine joy. He is the **God of Variety**. His initial command was clear: “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth” (Gen. 1:28). The inference was to “spread out and diversify.” From the very beginning, God intended for us to be different. God wanted mankind to be a variety of cultures with different foods, different music, different clothing, different languages and customs. People group distinctives are part of the kaleidoscopic diversity of creation at the human level, analogous to the wonderful biodiversity found at every other level of God’s creation. Significantly, in the biblical record both God’s creational diversity and post-flood dispersion of peoples are viewed as “good” not evil. God’s purpose is that a plurality of peoples would populate the planet. He never intended people to be monochrome and uniform, either as individuals or groups. The human race is one, yet many—which demonstrates that God loves both unity and diversity. Modern-day ethnic peoples have all sprung from the three sons of Noah, divinely dispersed for His purposes after the flood. Thus, human differences, languages—even ethnic peoples—are not to be viewed as the result of man’s sin or God’s judgment. Ethnic identity is rooted in God’s creative design and part of His original purpose. None of the various ethnic groups and “races” of mankind are products of the mark of Cain, or the curse of Ham, or the dispersion of Babel.¹¹ Diversity is not a response to an *accident*

¹¹ The Tower of Babel narrative has often been misunderstood and given a negative interpretation. Some have inferred from it that human differences of language and culture are the result of man’s sin and God’s subsequent judgment. A better way of interpreting the Babel incident is to see the people of the earth attempting to *counteract* what they correctly understood to be God’s purpose in diversifying and scattering the human race. From the beginning God had been in the process of separating people from one another in order to implement His desire that man should “be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth...” (Gen. 1:28). Thus, the scattering of Genesis 11 is not to be seen as a *curse* (something to be reversed in redemption or in the age to come)

of history. The diversity of the “nations” (ethnic peoples) is God’s idea. This truth is clearly taught in the OT record (Ps. 86:9 “all the nations you have made”) and later confirmed in the New Testament (again Acts 17:26 is a key text: “he made every nation [ethos]”).¹² The origin of the peoples is not in spite of but because of God’s will and plan.

but simply a *continuation* on God’s creative intent. True, God was judging human pride and man’s self-made unity, but the judgment at Babel is not to be seen solely as punishment. In God’s act of scattering humanity, He was also fulfilling His original intention for mankind. The act was preventative as much as punitive. It was designed to prove to earth’s peoples that they could not frustrate His plan for human diversity and pluralism. Note also that the diversifying of languages is reported in the “Table of Nations” (in Gen 10:5, 20, 31 specifically) *before* the Tower of Babel. Gentile peoples were being “separated” or scattered and spread out across the earth “according to their languages.” Genesis 10 lists 70 different people groups that were in existence by that time. And from these 70 “nations” God shoes one man Abram to build a nation to bless all nations.

¹² Scripture suggests at least two reasons why God desires ethnic diversity. First, no one ethnic group could ever adequately express the glory of Almighty God. God is infinite, and in order to mirror his infinity, all kinds of cultures and peoples are needed. Each is capable of illuminating one or more of the attributes of God. None can express all that God wants to be in the world. Only in an immense and grand variety could we begin to capture the character, grace and glory of God. God is seen and understood better through a multiplicity of cultures than He could be through a monoethnic humanity. Put another way, He cannot adequately be revealed in a creation of similarities. The beauty of a diamond consists in the number of facets it has. The greater number of facets, the greater the glory of the individual diamond. Likewise ethnic diversity is meant to express the full glory of God in different ways. Second, belonging to an ethnic group is for people’s well being. Authentic living is only found in corporate connectedness. God believes in the value of groups—family, clan, tribe, and ethnic peoples. The need to belong to a group is deeply ingrained in our human nature as created by God. The Old Testament shows that God values cultural/ethnic heritage and identity because they bring us a sense of belonging and security in a sin-cursed,

A third principle is first revealed in the OT record: **the destiny of “nations” is in God’s sovereign control.** Peoples and kingdoms rise and fall under His providence. He is the **God of History.** He is the supreme mover on the stage of international history. Deuteronomy 32:8 clearly states the “when the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples.” The living God not only made every “nation” from one man, and made each unique and different, but He also “determined the times set for them, and the exact places where they should live” (Acts 17:26; cf. also Deut. 2:9-12, 19-23¹³). That is, both the histories and locations of the ethnic nations are in the hand of God (see also Is. 40:15ff). Two conclusions can be drawn from this principle. First, it is clear that, in the long view, no people are a permanent entity. The ethnic “nations” begin, grow, flourish, decline and die like humans. Thus to idolatrously absolutize one’s own nation or group (as is often done in nationalism gone awry) is foolhardy. Second, all nations stand accountable and under God’s judgment.¹⁴ God has sovereign

fragmented world. The meaning and purpose of human life is best worked out in the relational context of collectivities.

¹³ Three times in Deuteronomy 2 (vv. 5, 9, and 19), Jehovah directly says he had given land to non-Israelite people. Significantly he uses the same vocabulary as is characteristically used of his land gift to Israel. Furthermore, the broader passage (2:10-12, 20-23) makes it clear that the process of multinational migration and conquest had also been under Jehovah’s sovereign control. The same language is used for Israel’s settlement in the land God had given them (see Deut. 2:12). As the prophet Amos (9:7) later warns Israel, they must not claim “we belong to Jehovah” as if *no other* nation mattered to God. He had been active in the histories of other nations as well as theirs!

¹⁴ For Westerners who have absorbed a predominately individualistic way of thinking about life and our relationship to God, it may be difficult to understand that God can and does deal with nations as wholes. Yet the Scriptures unquestionably affirm this reality. It is illustrated repeatedly in the long history of the OT from the book of Exodus onward. For example, the battle between Jehovah and Pharaoh

moral purposes in dealing with nations/peoples. For example, repentance can save a nation from God's impending judgment (Jer. 18:7-10; Jonah 3), and one nation can be used of God to punish another for its sin. This is why God permitted Israel to destroy the Canaanites (see Deut. 9:4, 5) and later allowed the Assyrians and Babylonians to drive out the Israelites as punishment for their sin. Yet His use of a nation to fulfill His purposes does not mean their moral superiority.

A fourth theological principle is seen first in Genesis and then progressively revealed in other Old Testament texts: **God's purpose is to bless all the nations redemptively.** As the **God of Redemption** He intends to bring the peoples the gift of His salvation. From the very beginning this salvific plan of God had the central figure of the "Seed" who was to come in the person of the Man of Promise (Gen. 3:15; 9:27; 12:1-3, etc.). To Abraham, the man of faith, God unveiled a global plan to reach all ethnicities: "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:3). Through this one man who left his people, all peoples on earth were to be blessed with the gift of the Messiah.¹⁵ *The Old Testament reveals a merciful and*

is not just between God and one recalcitrant individual; the whole nation of Egypt is implicated in the sin of oppression against the Israelites and suffers accordingly. The OT narrative goes on to show how successive nations either set themselves against Jehovah and his people (e.g., the Moabites, Amorites, and Amalekites) or become so wicked that they must be destroyed in the execution of God's judgment (the Canaanite nations) – see Deut. 9:4-6. The prophets in their oracles against the nations demonstrate the conviction that the nations (peoples) stand under the imminent judgment of God for a variety of reasons (see Isa. 24:5-6, etc.). Jehovah can even use Israel as an agent of judgment on the nations; he could also equally use the other nations as agents of judgment upon Israel (see Lev. 18:24-28; 26:17-33; Deut. 4:25-27; 28:25, 49-52; 20:25-28).

¹⁵ In Genesis 12, we see God's plan is to *bless* the nations. Three times he promises blessing—a key to understanding this grand OT missions text. Abraham was blessed by Jehovah (the passive verb stresses it was a matter of divine grace not human works) to *be* a blessing to the nations (or earth's "families"). This man and his

compassionate God ¹⁶ who is on mission to the nations. This is clearly seen in the Psalms and in Isaiah. This God-on-mission,

descendants were to be missionaries and channels of the truth to all the other surrounding nations (or ethnic peoples). They were to be blessed in this man's "seed." In fact, the "seed" of the woman (Gen.3:15), the seed of Shem in whose tents God would come to "tabernacle" or "dwell" (Gen. 9:27), and the "seed" of Abraham formed one collective whole. The recipients of this Messianic blessing initially are listed in Genesis 10—the seventy nations listed as all the families of the earth. That this is good news indeed for all earth's peoples is confirmed by later NT revelation: Romans 4:13 and Galatians 3:8. Note too that this promise of universal blessing to the families of the earth is so important it is essentially repeated in Genesis on four other occasions (Gen. 18:18; 22:18; 26:18; 28:14) lest God's people should forget their calling. Significantly, in Gen. 12:3 and 28:14, the Hebrew phrase for "all the families" (*kol mishpehot*) represents "smaller clan-like societies within the main group or nation" [according to Gerhard Kittle, ed., Geoffrey Bromily, trans. *Theological Dictionary of the NT*, vol 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 365]. It is roughly equivalent to the Greek *phylai* ("tribes") and so is used in the Greek OT translation of Gen 12:3. Thus, the blessings of Abraham are intended by God to extend down to fairly small groupings of peoples. Piper (*Let the Nations Be Glad*, 2003, pg. 167-169), comparing the Hebrew words found in all five Genesis texts with their NT counterparts (see texts above) and the equivalent Greek terms used in both the Septuagint and NT (*panta ta ethne*, etc.), concludes that "God's purpose for the world is that the blessings of Abraham, namely, salvation achieved through Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham, would reach to all the ethnic peoples of the world."

¹⁶ Just as all nations (peoples) stand under the judgment of God, so the OT text makes clear that they are recipients of the mercy of God. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," says Jehovah in his self-revelation to Moses (Ex. 33:19). This principle operates not only on behalf of Israel; any people group could benefit from it. One of the clearest OT illustrations of God's impartiality in his dealings with mankind is given by Jeremiah, after visiting a potter's house (see Jer. 18:1-4). The abiding lesson, articulated by the Lord himself (18:5-10): any nation (people) that repents in the face of God's impending judgment will be spared that doom and can become a [clay] vessel

therefore, has chosen and commissioned two Servants to take His message of salvation to earth's ethnic peoples: His servant Israel and His servant Messiah (Is. 42-54). Israel's vocation, her role in the divine purpose, was to represent and mediate His mercy and grace to the peoples. As the recipient of divine blessings, the Hebrew nation was to exalt God in its life and worship, attracting individuals from among the nations, inviting and incorporating them into the covenant family.¹⁷ Messiah's role was to be Yahweh's Sent-one, the Suffering Servant, offering

restored and shaped by God into a good vessel to fulfill his purposes. This thread—that he is a “gracious and compassionate God” who “takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked”—runs through numerous OT texts: see for example, Genesis 18, Exodus 32-34, Psalm 103:6-10; and Ezekiel 18.

¹⁷ The OT is not content to leave the nations/peoples in a passive role of merely being spectators of all God was doing in/for Israel. They were to come to see that *they* were to be the beneficiaries of Israel's ultimate blessing. This is seen in numerous OT texts. Seeing God's hand of blessing upon them through Israel, the nations were invited to join in applause to Jehovah (Psalm 47:1-2) and to praise Him for his salvation showered upon all nations (Ps. 67:1-7).

In both these psalms, God's renewed blessing on Israel is seen as “*the firstfruits of God's wider harvest among all nations on earth*” (Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP: 2006], 477. For his fine discussion of these two psalms, see pg. 474-8). Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., [in *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000)], builds a strong case from numerous OT texts that Israel had a duty to *actively* take the message of YHWH's salvation to the nations and call them to trust in God's promised Seed. He interprets the OT to imply *an actual missionary mandate* that ought to have resulted in Israel's engaging in centrifugal missions to the nations. Among others, C. J. H. Wright (2006, 502ff) is not convinced, believing there is “no clear mandate in God's revelation to Israel over the centuries for them to undertake ‘missions,’ in our sense of the word, to the nations.” Wright does agree, however, that Jonah is an exception to this principle (see footnote 23 below for the missiological significance of the prophet Jonah).

his life as a sacrifice for the peoples, satisfying the plan of the Father (Is. 53; Ps. 22). This hope of salvation is summed up in the prophets as the “desired [One] of all nations” (Haggai 2:7).¹⁸

Finally, the OT first reveals that **God’s passionate desire and purpose is to be worshipped and glorified by all people groups**. Above all else, He is the **God of Glory**. The Old Testament is filled with optimistic and hopeful expectations that Jehovah God will one day be worshipped by people from all the nations of the world. Significantly, this hope is repeatedly expressed in ethnic people group terminology (families, tribes, nations, peoples). God’s intent in blessing the nations is to lead the nations to both obedience and worship.¹⁹ This long-anticipated and certain hope of the nations is expressed in

¹⁸ Other OT prophets reveal Jehovah’s desire to redeem all earth’s people groups. One of the most vivid OT confirmations and illustrations of God’s saving purpose for the nations is found in the Book of Jonah. Significantly God commissioned the prophet to preach to the pagan city of Nineveh. He tried to run away because he knew God would be gracious to the people and forgive them. The Jews also had a long history of hating the idolatrous and wicked Assyrians (see the book of Nahum). The point of the book is not the fish. It’s more about missions and ethnocentrism and racism. The lesson for all: be merciful like God, not miserly like Jonah! As Christopher J. H. Wright (2006, 461) points out, the real missional challenge of the book of Jonah lies in its portrayal of God, not the prophet: “If Jonah is intended to represent Israel, as seems likely, then the book issues a strong challenge to Israel regarding *their* attitude to the nations (even enemy nations that prophets placed under God’s declared judgment), and regarding their understanding of *God’s* attitude to the nations. The concluding open-ended question of the book is an enduring, haunting rebuke to our tendency to foist our own ethnocentric prejudice on to the Almighty.”

¹⁹ C. J. H. Wright (478) points out: “*How* the nations will be brought to such worship and obedience to YHWH the God of Israel remains, within the Old Testament era, a mystery (as Paul acknowledged). But *that the* nations will one day bring all their worship to the one true and living God is left in no doubt. The sheer volume of texts that envision it is quite remarkable.”

several ways in the Old Testament. There are outright promises that the nations will one-day worship the true God,²⁰ confident prayers that God would be praised and honored among the nations,²¹ and even striking exhortations to *the people of God* to declare His glory among the nations.²² The much-anticipated praise of the nations for Israel's God is said to occur for numerous reasons.²³ This Old Testament expectation is premised on the reality that God is forever passionate for his own glory. Over and over God reveals that He is zealous to maintain his name and fame among the nations; His glory He will not give to another (Is. 48:9-11). The Old Testament makes clear that God's ultimate goal is to uphold and display the glory of His name to all peoples. He created all peoples for His glory (Is. 43:6-7). He called Israel and did numerous acts of power

²⁰ See Ps. 2:8; 45:17; 47:9; 86:9; 102:15,22; Is. 49:6; 51:5; 52:10; 52:15; 55:5; 56:7; 60:3; 66:18-19, etc.

²¹ See Ps. 67:1-5; 72:11, 17, etc.

²² See Ps. 9:11; 96:3; 105:1; Is. 12:4, etc.

²³ The psalms give at least four reasons for the nations in the future to break forth in almost universal praise and worship. Their response will be for: 1) ***the mighty acts of God***--see Ps. 66:3-4,8; 68:30-32; 86: 8-10; 96:1-3; 138:4-5; 2) ***God's sovereign and cosmic rule***--see Ps. 2:10-11; 22: 27-28; 67, etc.; 3) ***God's restoration of earthly Zion*** (which will ultimately be fulfilled in Christ's messianic reign over the world and be for the nations' benefit)—Ps. 102:13-22; and 4) simply because ***He is worthy of the praise of the whole universe***—Ps. 47, 100, 117, 145, 148, etc. George Peters [*A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1972), 115-16], claims there are more than 175 references in the Psalms of a universalistic note relating to the nations, many of them bringing the hope of salvation to the nations. This breath-taking missiological hope for the nations, a theme so evident in numerous psalms, has led Creighton Marlowe ["The Music of Missions: Themes of Cross-Cultural Outreach in Psalms." In *Missiology* 26/4 (1998), 452] to appropriately call the psalms the "music of missions."

through her for His glory.²⁴ In fact, God's plan is to fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory (Hab. 2:14).

Thus, even without the fuller and completed revelation of the New Testament, we can boldly assert that God has always been on mission to bring glory to Himself. The Lord Himself is the missionary who ultimately gathers and rescues, not simply the dispersed of Israel, but also people from all nations, so that they may see his glory.

THE FOUR GOSPELS

Against this Old Testament backdrop of God's purpose and plan for the ethnic peoples of the world, the Gospel writers present the Promised Messiah as the One passionate about fulfilling His Father's mission. The four Gospels clearly display the message and ministry of Christ as inclusive of all ethnic "nations." This is seen first in the birth narratives. Both Luke and Matthew's accounts of Christ's humble birth foreshadow and allude to the inclusion of Gentiles (ethnos = "peoples") in God's salvation story.

Matthew narrates the story of rich magi from Asia who come to Bethlehem to pay respects to the infant Jesus and offer Him gifts; this gospel writer also tells of Jesus' family traveling by night to Egypt in Africa to secure the safety of their son from the murderous threats of Herod. Luke, for his part, is careful to record that Jesus' birth was at the time of Caesar Augustus sitting on the Roman throne. He also notes the prayer of Simeon in Jerusalem who foretells that this baby will be a "light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory of Your people Israel (Lk. 2:30-32). All of these incidents were recorded to position the birth of Jesus in the context of the broader Gentile world and to help readers see that even at Christ's birth He had an outsider status and attracted the attention of those who felt excluded by the Jews.

²⁴ Ex. 14:4; Ps. 106:7-8; Jer. 13:11; Ezek. 20:14; 36:22-23, 32; I Sam. 12:20-22; II Sam. 7:23; I King 19:34.

The Gospel writers also seem to highlight that Jesus had roots and was raised in “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Matt 4:15-16 cf. Isa. 9:1). Jesus prepared for His public ministry by calling a “congregation” of disciples that was a radically inclusive fellowship. He is seen as intentionally broadening His social circle (“table fellowship”) to include sinners, tax collectors, outcasts and other untouchables, people often excluded by the Jewish religious authorities of His day. Furthermore, the Gospels record numerous occasions when Jesus stepped outside His own ethnic group and ministered to Gentile peoples and in Gentile regions. Some examples of our Lord’s intentional encounters with non-Jews: a Roman Centurion (Matt. 8: 5-13); a Samaritan village (Luke 9:51-55); a Canaanite woman from the region of Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 15:21-28); the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-38) and his later witness to the entire Samaritan village (4:39-42); and Greeks at Jerusalem (John 12:20-24, 32).²⁵ In these passages we find that Jesus often exploited encounters with Gentiles and Samaritans to help His disciples think in cross cultural terms and to develop an “all peoples” perspective. In all this He was modeling what He intended for His future Church to be.

One of the most illuminating encounters Jesus had with a non-Jew was with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). This episode represents the first instance of cross-cultural evangelism and so has much relevancy for our day. From our Lord’s approach and conversation with this despised woman, we learn principles for reaching out across ethnic and cultural

²⁵ In the John 12 passage, as Jesus is at the crescendo of his ministry, in his most public hour on earth (the grand worship procession we have come to call “Palm Sunday”), He is approached by a group of Greeks asking to see Jesus. The Pharisees, looking on, could only say, perhaps with some measure of prophetic force: “Look, the world has gone after him” (John 12:19). Jesus did not refuse to see them and saw afresh in this event his purpose to be lifted up higher, by death and by exaltation, so that all people could be drawn to him (John 12:12-32). “All men”—Greeks as well as Jews; Gentiles and Hebrews alike—were being prepared for His redemptive mission which was to be culminated by His approaching atoning death.

barriers. Jesus declares God's future for her and other Gentile nations: "An hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be his worshipers" (4:23). Jesus also uses the occasion to rebuke his disciples for their apathy for (and *probably their bigotry against*) *the Samaritans* (cf. *John 4:34-35* ²⁶ -- "*don't give me this four month's stuff*") and then uses the surrounding crops growing in the fields and waiting to be harvested, to instruct them about the urgency of reaching the lost (symbolized by the ripened "harvest") while there is yet time. Pointing to the Samaritan woman and people of Sychar ("lift up your eyes") who were at that moment coming on the scene, He calls them to join him in doing the work of evangelism, of "gathering" in the ripened Gentile harvest. In light of this passage and the long history of animosity between the Jews and Samaritans,²⁷ it is not by accident that our Lord includes Samaria in the Acts 1:8 version of the Great Commission mandate. ²⁸

What was implicit in the Gospel accounts becomes explicit when our Lord publicly declares the purpose and passion of His ministry. Standing in the temple area where He dramatically confronts the moneychangers and challenges the status quo, Jesus makes the issue the worship of the peoples. As he cleanses the temple of excessive commercialism, He echoes David's OT

²⁶ These verses are contextually not a foreign missions text (as commonly preached) but a "home" missions text. In reality there is no biblical distinction between "home" and "foreign" missions. The field is the "world" and wherever there are unreached people(s), we can do mission.

²⁷ See footnote 47 below.

²⁸ As his disciples took the Gospel to the ends of the earth, they were not to forget their own Samaria, those who were geographically close by but culturally far away. The Church has often made this "great omission," sending the Gospel abroad while neglecting those close at home who are ethnically and culturally different than majority Christians.

desire for the nations to come to God in his courts. He asks, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'?"²⁹ Significantly this account is recorded by all the Gospel writers, but only Mark includes the last four words of the Isaiah quotation (Mark 11:18; cf. Isa. 56:7). Clearly, Jesus understood this "to be the culmination of three years of preaching, healing, and ministering...".³⁰ Brian Blount summarizes the significance of this statement when he writes: "In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is a preacher of multicultural worship. He envisioned a future that was radically different from the one espoused by the temple leadership."³¹

The passion of Christ for unity-in-diversity is also seen in His high priestly prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. In this longest of all prayers attributed to Jesus, the true "Lord's Prayer," He clearly defines his own mission: he has been sent by the Father to give eternal life to all who would believe, that men might truly and fully know God. (17:2, 3). Then as He intercedes for his first disciples (17:6-19), He lays out their

²⁹ The phrase "all the nations" here is *pasin tois ethnesin* which clearly has a people group understanding; this is confirmed by a study of Isaiah 56:7. Isaiah's point is not that every individual Gentile will have a right to dwell in the presence of God but that there will be converts from "all peoples" who will enter the temple to worship. Jesus, of course, knew well this prominent OT hope. Jesus and the religious leaders listening knew immediately the rest of the Isaiah 56 passage: "The foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, and to love the name of the Lord, ... even those I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar." (56:6-7).

³⁰ DeYoung et al. 2003, 20.

³¹ Brian K Blount, "The Apocalypse of Worship: A House of Prayer for ALL the Nations," in *Making Room at the Table: An Invitation to Multicultural Worship*, ed. Brian K. Blount and Lenora Tubbs Tinsdale (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 16.

mission to the world: they are being commissioned to carry out his mission (17:18 “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world”). Their success in this mission will largely depend upon their being true to and sanctified by the Word he has given them (17: 8,14,17), being “kept” and “guarded” by the Father and Son (17:11,12), and on their “be[ing] one” (17:11). Christ then begins to pray for the Church (17:20-26), those who would believe “through their [the apostles’] word” (17:20). Significantly, Christ reveals that those in future generations who embrace his message and mission will also need the same oneness of love, mind and purpose. Three times in three verses he prays that we would be one, or “perfected in unity” (17:21-23).³² The intended purpose or result³³ of our Christian unity, he declares, is that the world may “believe” (17:20) and “know” (17:23) that the Father sent Jesus and truly loves the world of sinners. In other words, their unity before a watching world would be a visible witness of God’s love for all peoples. It would

³² The word “perfected” is translated from the Greek *teteleiomenoī* and is the perfect-passive subjunctive of the verb *teleo*. In this context it means “to become mature or completely one.” The use of the perfect tense indicates a permanent state as the goal and final result (according to the *Linguistic Key to the New Testament*). In other words, Christ intends for all believers to become mature in our faith, completely united as one with the Father and with one another.

³³ Twice Christ prayed that believers would be one “so that” the world would be impacted (17: 21, 23). In both verses “so that” is a translation from the Greek preposition *hina* and introduce what Greek scholars call an “hina clause” which always point to the intended result or purpose of something. According to Dana and Mantey, “The function of a ‘purpose clause’ is to express the aim of the action denoted by the main verb. This aim may be of a deliberate design . . . or merely of contemplated results.” In other words, a hina clause introduces an “if-then” propositional truth. If *X* occurs (though there’s no guarantee it will), then *Y* is the guaranteed result. So Jesus is interceding, “I pray for the Church of future generations that they may be completely united as one (and there’s no guarantee they will be one); and if they do demonstrate oneness, then two things will result: lost people will know God’s love and believe in me.”

demonstrate to all mankind that He is indeed the Messiah who alone can bring peace to a divided world. Visible oneness, then, is vital for the sake of the Gospel. It enables us to bear a convincing testimony before a lost world.³⁴ Thus, when incorporated a “both/and” process—witnessing in both Jerusalem/Judea/Samaria and the ends of the earth. Significantly, Jesus told His followers not to neglect their Samaria: those who are geographically near but culturally far.

Looking at the testimony of the total Gospel record, DeYoung and his co-writers state it well:

The earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth began and ended with a worldview and mission that was inclusive. We suggest that the bookends of Jesus’ life story display the message of the Gospels and provide a framework of inclusion for the congregations that were receiving and reading these first-century documents.³⁵

³⁴ It is also true that Jesus’ prayer has, in a sense, *already been answered*. That this prayer for our spiritual unity is not still a wish but a reality. When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost all true believers without distinction were united in one body (1 Cor. 12:13 cf. Ephes.4:4-6) and henceforth share a unity of common life (a new nature) in Christ. Yet, it must be obvious that Jesus’ intent is that our *oneness of life* (a community of nature) and *oneness of faith* (a community of sentiment) should manifest itself in a *oneness of love* (a community of affection) and *oneness of action* (a community of labor). Elsewhere the NT abundantly teaches this—that believers are to strive to be of the same mind and purpose (see 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 3:15, 16; 1:27, etc) and to maintain their Spirit-given unity and peace (Eph. 4: 3). In this same Gospel, on the same night, Jesus commands them to love one another so that the world would know that they were truly his disciples (John 13:34-35). Their loving unity was to serve as the distinguishing mark of discipleship, i.e., of being a Christ-follower. Consequently, the spiritual unity of believers in Christ must have some external expression that it may affect those outside Christ. That which is completed at once on the divine side is to be gradually realized and lived out by obedient believers.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 14.

believers of diverse ethnic backgrounds are living out their faith together in a loving and caring faith community, this has tremendous attractiveness to a watching world which is so often racially and ethnically divided.

At the end of the Gospels we observe again the intentional universality of Jesus' message and ministry. At His death both Jews and Gentiles embrace Him. After His resurrections, He leaves His disciples with His final marching orders. At least two of the Great Commission accounts explicitly describe Christ's global mission to include all peoples. Luke (24:47) records Jesus' final words: "repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in [my] name to all nations [ethnic peoples], beginning at Jerusalem."³⁶ Matthew's account (28:19) says Christ commissioned His followers to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations [pante ta ethne]."³⁷ Acts (1:8) clarifies that His missional strategy.

³⁶ In the immediate context (Lk 24: 44-47), it is significant that Jesus reminds his followers that the OT "Scriptures" ("the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms"-v.44) all foretold three vital things about his messianic ministry: his death ("it was necessary for the Christ to suffer"), his resurrection ("and to rise from the dead the third day") and his message of repentance and forgiveness ("remission of sins"). But it is the God-intended *destination* of this threefold message (where it is to be "preached in his name") –equally predicted in the OT revelation! –"to all nations" (=ethné), which is most surprising to many 21st Century believers who are unfamiliar with (or misread?) the full OT revelation.

³⁷Jesus is commanding, "Go and make disciples of all the ethnic groups." The Greek term translated "nations" (*ethne*) in Matt. 28 refers not to political or geographic groupings, as we often use the word today, but to people groups. NT usage of the plural *ethne* (and the singular *ethnos*) is similar to the way we speak of the "Cherokee nation" or the "Sioux nation." We mean something like "people with a unifying ethnic identity." For a fuller discussion of how these words and the important phrase *panta ta ethne* are used in the NT, see Piper, *Nations*, 161-167.

ACTS THROUGH THE EPISTLES

A fair reading of the rest of the New Testament indicates that Christianity's first congregations were multicultural bodies ministering in multiethnic urban settings. When Luke's historical account of the early church's growth found in Acts is carefully compared with the epistles, we see how Christ's disciples sought to embrace His inclusive vision. The Book of Acts emphasizes how the Spirit of Christ equips the followers of Christ to cross cultural and ethnic barriers. Clearly the first congregations that emerged under their leadership were diverse and inclusive. They were crossing cultural boundaries from day one. This is evident with the birth of the Jerusalem "mother" church. On the Day of Pentecost Jews from the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe, in Jerusalem for the feast, heard the Good News in the local dialect of their country of origin (Acts 2:5-11). Under the powerful preaching of the Spirit-emboldened Galilean disciples, over 3000 multicultural, multilingual Jews were saved and gathered into the church community. Whereas God confused the tongues at Babel to scatter the people, He multiplied tongues at Pentecost to unite believers from various ethnicities.³⁸ God lavishly demonstrated that His Spirit is now empowering the church to cross all cultural and linguistic barriers. Thus from the moment of its inception, the Church sought to be a house of prayer for all nations! Significantly, the Jerusalem congregation bridged a

³⁸ Mark Driscoll ("An Army of One," 42) points out that regarding diversity in the church, there are actually only two destinations: Babel or Pentecost. "Babel was the first human attempt at cultural uniformity—hanging out with people like me because I find myself so wonderful. . . . Conversely, Pentecost is God's attempt at kingdom unity through diversity—hanging out with people unlike me because God has been gracious to us all." See his insightful chart included as Appendix 1.

divide normally found in first-century Judaism—culture and language-specific synagogues.³⁹

There seems to be some evidence that the early congregations which emerged in Palestine during the latter part of the first century exhibited the same cultural diversity of the Jerusalem congregation, incorporating into their assemblies Hellenist Jews, Samaritan converts and other Gentile responders.⁴⁰ This growth of the early church into other Palestinian centers was no doubt sparked by the non-discriminatory outreach of two pioneering early church leaders: Philip, one of the seven Greek-speaking leaders, and Peter, one of the original twelve apostles. Philip left Jerusalem and witnessed to the Ethiopian finance minister (Acts 8:26-40), thus enabling the Gospel to enter Nubia, considered by many of that day to be “the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8) because it was outside the boundaries of the Roman Empire. The Apostle Peter, after some prodding from the Lord regarding his initial racist separation, left Jerusalem and preached to the household of Cornelius, a Roman centurion in Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast (10:1-48).⁴¹ Significantly, God took the initiative to teach

³⁹ Isaiah Sonne. “Synagogue.” In *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia, R-Z*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1962, 478-79.

⁴⁰ Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Lives, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist Press: 1979), 37, 39, 55.

⁴¹ In Acts 10 we see how the apostle Peter struggled with his own ethnic pride and deeply ingrained racism toward non-Jews. When told to take the message of the Gospel to Cornelius, a Roman, he at first objected (“Surely not, Lord!”--10:14) on the basis of his Jewish traditions (cf. 10:28—it was “unlawful” [literally “breaking a taboo”] to even “associate with a Gentile or visit him.”). Finally, after a thrice repeated trance-vision from God grabbed his attention, Peter consents to go, confessing his new understanding: “God has shown me that I should [no longer] call any man unholy or unclean” (10:28). The Holy Spirit is clearly writing a new law upon Peter’s heart! If Peter, a Spirit-filled preacher (at Pentecost) and prominent church leader, can still

the preacher Peter a profound lesson growing out of his ethnic consciousness and his racist (anti-ethnic) attitude toward no-Jews. Philip the layman had earlier gone into despised Samaria and preached Christ (Acts 8:5-25). Given the animosity between Jews and Samaritans at the time,⁴² this was an amazing development, but certainly consistent with the modeling ministry of Christ (cf. John 4).

These incidents in the life of the early believers are no doubt incorporated into the Acts record by Luke to dramatize and symbolize the future of the church.⁴³ Since Jesus ministered to

have racist attitudes long after meeting Christ, then it should not surprise us today to find Christian leaders who are still wrestling with ethnocentrism or outright racism!

⁴² Philip preached to the Samaritans at a time when they were a people largely estranged from the Jews. There had been a long history of animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans, considered to be "half breeds." In 722 B.C., the Assyrians conquered the Northern [ten tribes] Kingdom of Israel and its capital city, Samaria. Those deported from their homeland and dispersed to various provinces of the Assyria Empire were later required to intermarry to reduce the prospect of rebellion. Likewise many non-Jews were transported into Samaria and intermingled among the remaining Israelites. The resultant mixed race produced lots of tension, The Samaritans withdrew from the worship of Yahweh at Jerusalem and established their own worship at Mt. Gerizim in Samaria (John 4:20-22). The Samaritans regarded only the Pentateuch as authoritative. As a result of this history, the Jews repudiated Samaritans and considered them heretical. So intense were the ethnic and cultural tensions between the two groups, that they avoided contact with each other as much as possible (see John 4:9; Ezra 4:1-24; Nehemiah 4:1-6; Luke 10:25-37, etc).

⁴³ It is significant that the Holy Spirit has Luke record the ethnicities of these first converts. These early stories of Gentile conversions featuring the Samaritans, an Ethiopian, and the Roman soldier, Cornelius, are intended, no doubt, to show that God does not show partiality or favoritism (Acts 10:34-35) in reaching out to others, and thus his Church and churches should not show any partiality. If God welcomes men and women of every nation, tribe, people, and

both Jews and Gentiles in this same Palestinian region during His days on earth, the early believers were simply following His lead. The crucial role Greek minority leaders like Stephen and Philip played in liberating the gospel from Jerusalem shows the valuable contribution cultural diversity makes to Christian witness, expanding the possibilities for gospel advance. We also see in these early recorded incidents that Acts recognizes differences in culture but it does not cater to it. In fact, one thing is clear in Acts: the power of God through the gospel eliminates cultural divisiveness.

According to Acts, the first congregation of Jesus' followers that intentionally welcomed and enfolded both Jews and Gentiles into their fellowship, was at Antioch of Syria. Founded by Greek-speaking Jewish Christians who left Jerusalem during the persecution that arose after Stephen's martyrdom in the mid-thirties, this culturally diverse body was evidently composed of Jews, Greeks, Africans, Cypriots, and other Syrians (Acts 11:19-26; cf. 13:1).⁴⁴ Ethnic strife, violence, fear and hatred were common in this city of half a million, the third largest city in the Roman Empire. Yet the Antioch church lived out an inclusive table fellowship that emulated the ministry and vision of Jesus. This was modeled and encouraged by a diverse leadership team composed of: Paul and Barnabas, both Jews

tongue into His Church, so must we welcome people unlike ourselves into our own local fellowships.

⁴⁴ The evangelists and church planters mentioned in Acts 11:20 were men of diverse ethnic, cultural and regional backgrounds: Cyprus was an island in the northeastern Mediterranean Sea (and home of Barnabas); Cyrene was a city on the north African coast (today Libya); they spoke to Hellenists, i.e., Greeks, not Greek-speaking Jews. It is noteworthy that these early evangelists chose not to return to their own homeland, to their own comfort zones. Nor did they speak just to Jews, to people more like themselves. Because they were very intentional about cross-cultural outreach, Luke reports that "the hand of the Lord was with them" (Acts 11:21) and as a result "large numbers" were converted (11:21-26—three times it is noted large numbers were being saved!). God evidently bless obedience!

raised outside of Palestine who were immersed in Greek culture and bilingual; Manean, related to Herod Antipas, and thus probably a hated Roman; Lucius, who had come from Cyrene in North Africa; and Simeon, called Niger (“the black”), probably a dark-skinned African.⁴⁵ Because this kind of social solidarity and racial reconciliation was so radical in that day and in that city, the locals began to call them “Christians” or Christ followers (11:26). The normal classifications and categories did not fit! Exactly as Jesus had promised and predicted (John 13:35; 17:21-23), He would be most clearly recognized by the love and unity of His children.⁴⁶

That the Lord of Harvest used this Antioch model to spread the Gospel and expand the Christian church during the first century is evident. The Antioch church cared for the world because the congregation reflected the world! Mentored and

⁴⁵ Significantly, when Luke lists these five leaders in the Antioch church, he does so not only by gifting but by ethnicity as well. Two are from Africa, one from the Mediterranean, one from the Middle East and another from Asia Minor. Luke is no doubt highlighting that Antioch was church for all people.

⁴⁶ That Jews were openly loving Gentiles, Gentiles were loving Jews, and they were all worshiping God together in one local church at Antioch must have quite an impact on their city. This was unprecedented and amazing, something only God could do! That formerly estranged groups could now be reconciled and now unified, was a testimony, no doubt, of the power of the Gospel and the Living Christ to overcome century-old barriers of sin and separation. But not only was this a very ethnically diverse church, it was an economically diverse one as well. A careful study of Acts 16 and the founding of the Philippian church on Paul’s second missionary journey, reveals the socioeconomic status of the first converts. Lydia was a seller of purple fabrics and so evidently a successful business woman (she had a home large enough for the young church to meet in). Also converted early and enfolded into the fellowship of this new church was a poor slave girl (16:16-24) and a middle class (who else pulls the night shift?) jailer (16:27-40). NT churches, it seems, were both multi-ethnic and economically diverse. No wonder they attracted attention in the pagan world!

sent forth by the Antioch leadership team, the Apostle Paul and his co-workers founded numerous other congregations, each started in a fashion similar to the strategy used in Antioch—and first given by Jesus.⁴⁷ The result—many of these missionary planted churches of the New Testament era were multicultural. There is internal scriptural evidence of their multiethnic character. Scan the names of folk mentioned by Paul in the last chapter of his letter to Rome. Here we find a mix of Greek, Roman (Latin), and Jewish names (Rom. 16:3-16). Consider the historical record of the planting of the church at Philippi—we find a Jewish proselyte business woman, a Roman centurion, and a Greek slave girl (Acts 16:14-40). Remember the cities where the first missionary teams traveled with the Gospel—places like Corinth, Ephesus, Laodicea which often lay at the junctions of the Roman trade and shipping routes. As a result there was much ethnic interaction in these marketplace communities. In these cosmopolitan crossroads between the eastern and western portions of the Mediterranean world, the apostolic teams established thriving congregations which undoubtedly reflected the ethnic diversity and confronted the religious pluralism of these urban communities.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Paul's teams of itinerant evangelists normally preached first in the synagogues and reached some Jews (Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8, etc) and then reached out to other "God-fearers" and Gentiles attached to the synagogue.

⁴⁸ In the missional model of Antioch, missionary outreach—both in their own community and beyond—was not just another program or budget line item; it flowed out of who they were! Mission is not something we do but what we are—believers are on mission with God. We also see in the Antioch church that one of the vital marks of a healthy multi-ethnic church is an awareness of and involvement in global needs.

THE EXAMPLE OF THE EPHESIANS CHURCH

A look at one city church validates our premise. Ephesus, for example, was an important city in Western Asia with nearly a quarter of a million residents. Paul spent three years there establishing a strong congregation, one which Luke clearly states is multicultural. The author of Acts writes, “all of the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord” (19:10; see also 19:17 and 20:21). Ben Witherington writes, “It is here in Ephesus that [Paul] has the longest stable period of ministry without trial or expulsion, here that he most fully carries out his commission to be a witness to all persons, both Jew and Gentile”⁴⁹ Unlike some modern-day pastors and church planters who specifically target one ethnic group, Paul’s goal was evidently to ensure that the churches planted and nurtured under his care would both begin and remain multicultural. Biblical scholar Wayne Meeks affirms, “By the time the extant letters were written, the established pattern was instead to found in every city associations of believers in Christ, drawn from gentiles and Jews alike.”⁵⁰

This heterogeneous nature of the first-century churches is further validated by a careful study of Pauline theology of the church, best articulated in his epistle to the Ephesian church written sometime between A.D. 60–62. A key theme of Paul’s letter is the “mystery” (or truth heretofore unrevealed) of the church which is “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (3:6). This was truth completely hidden from OT saints (cf. 3:5, 9). Shedding light on the God-intended nature of the church, the Apostle reminds this mixed congregation that all believers in Christ are equal before the

⁴⁹ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), footnote 389, 454.

⁵⁰ Wayne A Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1983, 168.

Lord as His children and as fellow citizens of his eternal kingdom. This was radical theology, a marvelous truth that only believers of this present age possess.

Earlier in Ephesians 2, the Apostle Paul had directly addressed the Gentile component of the assembly. In plain and passionate language, he exhorts them to no longer view themselves as alienated, as “excluded from . . . [or] strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (2:12). No longer were they to see themselves as “strangers” and “aliens” (2:19), in a state of social and spiritual alienation.⁵¹ Paul’s point is that the Gentiles have now not only been reconciled to God but also to their former enemies⁵² through the cross work of Christ, the Great Barrier-Breaker. Consequently, they were no longer “far off” but had been

⁵¹ In the first century, Gentiles experienced two types of alienation: social and spiritual. The first was a result of the animosity that existed between Jews and Gentiles for thousands of years. Jews considered Gentiles to be outcasts, objects of derision, and reproach. Even more significant was the second. Spiritual alienation was a raw reality because Gentile people were cut off from God in five different ways vividly described by Paul in Ephesians 2:11-12. While Gentiles had many gods, they did not recognize the true God because they did not want him. Thus their spiritual separation from God and His chosen people Israel was no one’s fault but their own.

⁵² Reconciliation is a common NT theme (see 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Rom. 5:8-10; Col. 1:19-23). Through the sacrificial atonement of Christ, believers are doubly reconciled. As Jews and Gentiles are brought to God through Christ Jesus, they are brought together with each other. This is the Gospel of peace which Christians are to “preach” (literally “bring or announce good news”) to a divided world because Christ Himself first came and preached this same message of hope (Ephes. 2:16, 17). He who is “Himself our peace” has come and preached the good news of peace (2:14, 17) and has then given us this ministry and message of reconciliation to share with others (2 Cor. 5:18-19). The Greek word for “reconcile” (*katallasso*) means to “change” or “exchange.” The essence of the Gospel is that God initiates a change in the sinner’s status in that He brings him from a position of alienation to a state of forgiveness and right relationship with Himself.

“brought near” (2:13 cf. 2:17). In the midst of the alienation and animosity of their surrounding culture, Christ was their ultimate “peace” who had “broken down” the “dividing wall of hostility”⁵³ between Jews and Gentiles and had made both groups to be a part of “one new man,”⁵⁴ the united body of believers, the church (2:14-15). In Christ, God had shattered the Jewish Temple’s ethnic barrier (2:14), and established a new temple composed of all peoples by the Spirit (2:19-22).⁵⁵ For Paul, this doctrine of reconciliation was not to be merely theoretical or an otherwise unobservable truth. It was to be a very visible reality, lived out in the local church where saved people of diverse backgrounds now worshiped God together as one, loving and caring for each other. This was the Apostle’s inspired vision and

⁵³ The “dividing wall of hostility” (or “middle wall of partition”) alludes to a wall in the Jewish temple that partitioned off the Court of Gentiles from the areas accessible only to Jews. Paul is referring to this wall as symbolic of the social, religious and spiritual separation that kept Jews and Gentiles apart. This is vivid description of the total isolation Jews and Gentiles experienced from each other.

⁵⁴ “New” translates a Greek word (*kainos*) that refers to something completely unlike what it was before. It refers to being different in kind and quality. Those in Christ are spiritually no longer Jew or Gentile, only Christian (cf. Romans 10:12, 13; Galatians 3:28). Christ never excludes any who come to Him, and those who are His are not *spiritually* distinct from one another—no matter what their ethnic or socioeconomic background. At the same time, people do not give up their culture and ethnicity when they become believers. One is now a *Christian* Jew or Gentile.

⁵⁵ NT scholar Craig Keener (“An Army of Ones” in *Leadership*, Spring 2005, 39) points out that Paul wrote this epistle from prison, thus modeling for his hearers that biblical diversity is worth sacrificing for. Paul spent the last quarter of Acts in Roman custody because he refused to compromise the message of God’s love to the Gentiles. The reason? “He was charged with profaning the Temple by admitting an Ephesian Gentile.” Thus he can forcefully teach the ethnically mixed Ephesian church about the *new* temple of God.

theology for the church, one to be realized by all future generations.⁵⁶

Ethnic reconciliation is in fact a central message in the NT epistles: if we are reconciled to God, then we must be reconciled to one another. Keener challenges us:

If God called first-century believers to surmount an ethnic barrier he himself established in salvation history--the barrier between Jew and Gentile--how much more does he summon us to surmount all other barriers of our making? Overcoming the Jewish-Gentile barrier is one of the dominant themes in the New Testament, and it provides a model for us today for overcoming every other barrier dividing God's people.⁵⁷

THE STRUGGLE TO PRESERVE UNITY-IN-DIVERSITY

Adjusting to this fresh perspective of culturally diverse communities of faith, and thus maintain authentic unity, was no easy task in the early church. While Jesus ate with tax-gatherers and sinners, not all His followers wanted to eat with Gentiles! Differences brought challenges, conflict, and even tension. The New Testament confirms that the first-century churches often struggled to preserve unity in diversity. The Apostle Paul is compelled to often remind them that in Christ there was no Jew or Gentile (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:11-26; Col. 3:11 cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 10:12). In these passages, Paul does not teach that being in Christ obliterates our ethnicity, nationality, or sexuality. Rather,

⁵⁶ For another illustration of the theological nature and purpose of the intercultural church, see Paul's speech in Athens (Acts 17:26-28). Paul states three illuminating truths: 1) that all ethnic people groups are created by God from one man, Adam; 2) that a sovereign God has determined the exact time and places where each group will live; and 3) He has done this so that they may grope/ seek after Him and perhaps find Him. The point: if the local church reaches out to all the different ethnic groups moving into the neighborhood, then there is a strong possibility they will find Him!

⁵⁷ Keener, 39

he is teaching that while our racial, national, social and sexual distinctions remain, they no longer divide us. They are transcended in the unity of the family of God. When the Apostle Paul teaches that the body is one unit with many members, he clarifies the kind of parts he has in mind: "whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free" (1 Cor. 12:13). That is, the body of Christ is one, and its different ethnic parts, its different socio-economic parts, are organically one in the Spirit. In fact, the different parts need each other (1 Cor. 12:14-20).⁵⁸

The New Testament faithfully records at least four occasions where early church leaders struggled to preserve the unity found in culturally heterogeneous congregations. In Acts 6:1-6 we see the Jerusalem congregation on the verge of an ethnic conflict. A crisis emerged over the neglect of Greek-speaking immigrant widows in the daily food distribution. The church leadership wisely addressed the issue promptly and prayerfully selected seven new leaders (6:3, 5); significantly all had Greek names. The goal was evidently to avoid favoritism and prevent an ethnically divided body.⁵⁹ We can learn from the early church

⁵⁸ Many preachers today misunderstand the thrust of 1Cor. 12:13, limiting the force of Paul's teaching by applying it solely to the exercise of spiritual gifts given to people in the local church (which is true to the context—see 12:1-11; 12:28-31). Why is Paul stressing so strongly the tendency of one part of the body to dissociate from another part? He seems to be drawing attention to sections of society and the church that were prone to declare, "I don't need you." Jews might say that to Greeks. Or freeman to slaves. Or today, Anglos might say that of Hispanics or Blacks. Koreans might say that of Japanese. Many today might say that of "undocumented workers." Paul says you do need them. The parts that seem weaker are indispensable. Those that seem less honorable should be treated with special honor. There should be no division over culture or class or color in the body. We should have equal concern for each other.

⁵⁹ Missiologist Francis M. Dubose points out: "When the conflict arose over the alleged favoritism shown Judaic Hebrew widows above Hellenistic Hebrew widows, the solution was not to divide these people according to their ethnic and cultural differences. The solution was to handle the problem administratively. Thus deacons were

the wisdom of being sensitive to the concerns of ethnic peoples in the affairs of the church.⁶⁰

From Galatians 2:11-14 we gather that a serious crisis also arose in Antioch when the apostle Peter visited the young congregation. Under pressure from visiting Judaizers from Jerusalem, Peter backed down from his earlier practice of open table fellowship where Jews and Gentiles ate together. This prompted “even [bicultural] Barnabas” and other Jewish Christians to follow his example. The Jerusalem group was convinced Gentiles must first become Jews culturally and religiously (be circumcised, etc.) before they could embrace the Christian faith and enjoy full communion. Sensing the seriousness of this threat, Paul confronted Peter publicly on his ill-advised behavior, telling him his action compromised “the truth of the Gospel” (2:14). Paul saw it as hypocritical and heretical. He chose not to take what seemed the pragmatic course of action, that of founding a separate and exclusively Gentile church. “He believed that it was not enough to maintain a spiritual unity in the universal church. Unity needed to be seen and experienced in the local congregation as well.”⁶¹ Thus he challenged “the segregated lunch counter.”

The early church’s third attempt to preserve the unity of the church in the midst of ethnic diversity and cultural conflict was

selected to give special attention to such matters *that there might be unity in the church.*” [emphasis in the original]. *How Churches Grow in an Urban World* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1978), 127.

⁶⁰ Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice [in *More Than Equals: Racial Healing for the Sake of the Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), 155-57] see four vital lessons from Acts six: 1) “minority complaints should be taken very seriously;” 2) “culture-conscious choices may be needed to correct [past] injustices;” 3) “minorities need to be given a greater voice in church life;” and 4) “faithful response to cultural injustice can lead to greater fruit for the gospel” (cf. Acts 6:7). These could certainly help the church today overcome often unconscious racial barriers in our midst.

⁶¹ DeYoung, 35.

the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-31). With representatives from both the Antioch and Jerusalem congregations, this leadership summit met to settle once for all the vital doctrinal issue of whether Gentiles should be required to cross an ethnic barrier and become culturally Jewish in order to be saved. Significantly, the Jerusalem church's biggest struggles involved not Christology or eschatology, but how to embrace fellowship with Gentile believers (essentially a soteriological issue)! After a lengthy and lively debate, the apostles and elders forever affirmed that salvation is totally by grace through faith in Christ alone. They defied efforts by the Judaizers to impose legalism and ritualism as necessary prerequisites to salvation. Significantly both Barnabas and Peter, now convinced of their previous error, supported Paul in his defense of the purity of the gospel. Table fellowship and social interaction was restored. Believers were warned against syncretism but allowed to be themselves and to worship God in their own way. The verdict allowed Jews and Gentiles to retain their distinctive cultures.⁶² This wise decision at the Jerusalem Council ultimately preserved the unity of the churches and empowered Paul and others to forge ahead in their ministry of reconciliation. The result was that multicultural churches continued to be established. At the Jerusalem Council, there was not the slightest entertainment of the notion that the church should divide into a Jewish constituency and a Gentile constituency, as some church growth advocates might recommend today.

Finally, from Paul's letter to the Roman believers we learn that the church at Rome was ethnically mixed yet divided (see 16:3-16; 1:16; 2:11, 17; 9:23-24; 11:13, etc.). Thus, the Apostle emphasizes that theologically Jews and Gentiles must come to

⁶² That the early church recognized the value of converts retaining their own cultures is seen also in Acts 21:20-26 and Romans 14. Kenner ("Army of One," 39) properly observes, "When dominant culture churches do pursue integration, they must allow the diverse cultures they have welcomed a voice in shaping a truly multicultural church. ... dominant cultures must be mindful to not swallow up minority ones."

God on the same terms, through Jesus Christ. There was to be no difference. He also deals with the practical questions of not despising each others' customs regarding food and holy days. Believers from different ethnic and economic backgrounds were to welcome, receive and embrace one another in the Lord (Rom. 14; 15:1-7), following the example of Christ who became a servant to all and embraced us all (15:7-9). Believing Jews and Gentiles were to not just tolerate one another but to sacrificially and warmly care for one another, living in harmony, thus preserving their unity-in-diversity in Christ (15: 5-7). In areas of preference and non-essentials, they were to pursue loving relationships. In Romans 14–15 Paul instructs Christians to demonstrate their maturity by becoming increasingly flexible and accommodating to those with weaker faith, no matter their cultural bent.

The Consummation of the Vision

The New Testament closes with John the Apostle's beautiful description of the redeemed in heaven gathered together to worship the Lamb for all eternity. In the Apocalypse we see a vision of the future that brings all peoples together. Because of Christ's finished cross work and the Church's Great Commission obedience, there is a great multitude of glorified saints from every tribe, language, people group, and nation (Rev. 5:8-12; 7:9-10).⁶³ This teaches us that when Christ returns, the ethnic

⁶³ The Greek terms here—tribe (*phyle*), language (*glossa*), people (*laos*), and nation (*ethnos*)—all clearly are people group concepts, as confirmed by both their consistent NT usage and their prevalence in the Greek OT as substitutes for Hebrew words. See John Piper's full discussion of these terms and their OT counterparts (*Ibid.*, 161-191). It is clear from the consistent use in the NT of the singular *ethnos*, used here in Revelation 5:9 (and found at least 10 times in Revelation), that it always refers to *corporate* people groups, not to individual Gentiles (Piper, 161-62). This is verified, for example, in another parallel passage, Rev 15:4, where we again see "all nations" (*panta ta ethnē*) worshiping the Lord, a clear allusion to Psalm 86:9 (Ps. 85:9 LXX). Unfortunately, none of the four terms in 5:9 will yield a precise definition of "people groups." Biblically, the concept of "people group,"

element of our identity will evidently not be eradicated. God's great goal in history to be worshipped by every people group will at last be realized.⁶⁴ These two key passages also teach us that the task of missions is not complete until at least some individuals in every people group have become Christ's disciples. If in the final company of the redeemed in heaven there are converts from all the peoples, then the missions mandate must include converts, not just proclamation.⁶⁵

In Revelation 21 this scene of multiethnic unity is again picked up so that believers of all ages might be convinced that God's never-ending purpose for ethnic peoples will ultimately prevail. This time we see the eschatological vision of redeemed humanity in the new creation. In Revelation 21:3, John records "Behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his peoples [laoi]." Most modern

according to Piper's thorough study, is "flexible enough to provide an inclusive designation for groups of various sizes" (191). Nonetheless, the concept, which has become quite popular in missiological literature in the last 50 years, is thoroughly based upon the biblical terminology.

⁶⁴ That the worshipping multitude gathered in heaven described in Rev 7:9-10 are evidently tribulation martyrs (see 7:14) who did not go with the raptured church but came to salvation during the great tribulation, does not lessen our argument. Both before and after the rapture, *God's missionary purpose remains the same*: He aims to be worshiped by converts from all the tribes, nations, peoples and languages. And the identity of the worshipping multitude in Rev 5 is clearly the raptured church (the 24 elders of 5:8 are representative of the redeemed church). Both groups of saints are ransomed by the blood of Christ (see 5:9 & 7:14) and so among God's elect.

⁶⁵ It is difficult to define the specific task of missions as planting an indigenous church in every people group because, as Piper points out, we are unsure of the size and precise definition of biblical people groups. Piper (194) asks "When Paul said [in Romans 15] that his special missionary work was completed from Jerusalem to Illyricum, had he in fact planted a church in every family or clan [alluding to Genesis 12:3]?"

translations persist in translating: “They will be his people [laos].”⁶⁶

John Piper notes:

But what John is saying is that in the new heavens and the new earth the humanity described in Revelation 5:9 will be preserved: persons ransomed by the blood of Christ “from every tribe and language and people and nation.” The diversity will not disappear in the new heavens and the new earth. God willed it at the beginning. It has a permanent place in his plan.⁶⁷

We are also told that the kings of all “the nations” (literally “the peoples”) come into the New Jerusalem bringing their “glory and honor” (or “splendor”) to lay at King Jesus’ feet (21:24-27). In other words, the unique giftedness and goodness of each culture will be there at the end of time and will last forever. There is a recognition and celebration of the differences of a plurality of different peoples and cultures—yet oneness in their coming together to be in the presence of the one Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Christopher Wright correctly observes:

With undoubtedly deliberate intent, the final book of the Bible comes to its climax with the picture of the nations purged of all sin, walking in the light of God, bringing their wealth and splendor into the city of God, contributing their redeemed glory and honor to the glory and honor of the Lamb (Rev. 21:24-27).

⁶⁶ The genuine, original reading of Rev. 21:3 is in the plural. The United Bible Societies *Greek New Testament* (4th ed.) and the Nestle-Aland Greek NT (27th ed.) chose *laoi* as original. The NRSV reads “peoples” as do commentaries by Heinrich Kraft, Leon Morris, Robert Mounce and G.K. Beale. Piper (184) concludes from Rev. 21:3: “Therefore, John (recording the angelic voice) seems to make explicit ... that the final goal of God in redemption is not to obliterate the distinctions of the peoples but to gather them all into one diverse but unified assembly of believers.”

⁶⁷ 197-98

The brokenness of humanity is healed at the river and tree of life (Rev. 22:1-2).

... The inhabitants of the new creation are not portrayed as a homogenized mass or as a single global culture. Rather they will display the continuous glorious diversity of the human race through history⁶⁸

Thus, in the eternal city, there will be no more divisions, barriers, or exclusions because of race, religion or politics. God's overarching missiological goal will be realized: to uphold and display His glory among all the world's ethnic peoples in order that each people can fully enjoy Him forever. The mission of God, it is evident in the Apocalypse, is not merely the salvation of innumerable souls but more specifically the healing of the nations (peoples).

In the overall message of Revelation there is an evident contrast which shows us how multiculturalism can be a bane or a blessing. The values of Babylon (the prostitute-Rev. 17-18) are contrasted with those of the New Jerusalem (the bride-Rev. 4-5, 21-22). "In Revelation we see members of all peoples and languages worship the beast, but we also see members of all peoples and languages worship the lamb."⁶⁹ The lesson: while it is true that multiculturalism can be abused, under the Lordship of Christ, humanity's rightful ruler, we can celebrate a true cultural diversity, one that honors its Creator.

CONCLUSIONS

Looking at the totality of biblical revelation, we conclude that ethnic diversity is both God intended and found throughout the eternal state. Diverse churches illustrate more clearly the truth that God created people of all races and ethnicities in his image. They display more visibly the truth that Jesus is not a tribal deity but is Lord of all races, nations and ethnicities. They

⁶⁸ Wright, 2006, 454, 456

⁶⁹ Keener, "Army of One," 43.

exhibit more compellingly the aim and power of the cross of Christ to reconcile us both to God and to one another. They express more forcefully the work of the Spirit to unite us in Christ through our common Spirit baptism into one body (1 Cor. 12:13). And they demonstrate more clearly the blood-bought destiny of the church to be “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9). Intentionally intercultural congregations prepare us for the eschatological goal of the redeemed of all ethnicities worshipping the Lamb together throughout eternity.

Thus, the multicultural church not only prepares us for a picture of eternity but allows this divine objective to be fulfilled in some measure this side of eternity. Multiethnic congregations become an example of what can be done on earth now and a foretaste of what will be in heaven. If the church is to be a visible representation of the power of God and of heaven, and if all the saints will one day be together proclaiming the one reason they are together, namely Christ’s salvation (see Rev. 7:9-12), then it stands to reason reconciliation would be most visibly demonstrated through various cultures and people worshipping together here on earth. The church functions best in community and not with some separate-but-equal mentality that brings us together only on special occasions. In intercultural churches people come together to learn, grow, and interact with each other in dynamic community, rather than as separate enclaves.

Practically speaking, local churches are blessed immeasurably when they pursue diversity. Every culture benefits from the insights into reality that other cultures bring. None of us has a corner on the truth. “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” (1Cor. 13:12).

The first NT churches were certainly multiethnic. While this does not necessarily constitute a mandatory pattern for all future churches, it does establish a biblical precedent! The admiration we feel for the diversity seen in the NT and the early church should carry over into strong desire for the visible church today. In fact, if we admire it and desire it, then we should pursue this goal, by His grace and for His glory!

In this age God is already drawing people of every ethnicity to worship Him for all eternity. And if this is what King Jesus is doing in our time, then this is what we need to be doing! His agenda should be ours.

North American ethnic diversity need not be an obstacle to intercultural ministry and developing multiethnic churches. On the contrary, we should be capitalizing on this grand opportunity, seeing it as sovereignly orchestrated. A biblically based conviction emerging from the scriptural meta-narrative should drive us forward in the pursuit of this objective: local churches should reflect the demographics of their communities. Whenever possible, congregations should be multiethnic and multicultural. Our desire and prayer should be to develop and to plant churches that are diverse not merely by default, but by design! Driven by both the demographic and biblical imperative, the twenty-first century should be the century of multiethnic congregations.

This should not be seen as a call for diversity at any cost. We are not saying, "Diversity is the top priority of the church that outweighs all others." There are things more important than ethnic diversity. For example, certain theological and philosophy of ministry commitments are more important. This pursuit of diversity should be seen as part of the overall ministry and message of a healthy biblical church as it seeks to glorify God in its community.⁷⁰ It is not a panacea for other problems in the church.

Dynamic multiethnic churches best display the grace, power and glory of God to a watching often skeptical world. His **grace** is magnified because those once former enemies, once

⁷⁰ A good example of a church integrating this pursuit into its overarching corporate mission, is Bethlehem Baptist in Minneapolis, led by Pastor John Piper. Their mission statement reads: "We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things **for the joy of all peoples** through Jesus Christ." See John Piper, "How and Why Bethlehem Pursues Ethnic Diversity" an elder paper released on Jan. 24, 2007. www.desiringgod.org/resourcelibrary/TasteAndSee/ByDate/2007/1953_How_and_... Accessed 6/27/08.

separated, are now brought together in Christ. His **power** is revealed because now both the oppressed and the oppressor are radically transformed to love one another. His multifaceted **glory** is put on public because each culture and ethnic group enfolded into the church reveals something unique to be treasured about our great God.

Appendix 1

Babel

A small city

Marked by walls

Intentionally resisted diversity

Avoided hospitality

Gathered a homogeneous people

Tried to make their name great

God came down

God judged their sin

God confused their languages

Pentecost

A cosmic kingdom

Marked by no walls

Intentionally pursued diversity

Practiced hospitality

Gathered all peoples

Made Jesus' name great

God came down

God forgave their sin

God unified their languages

Source: Mark Driscoll, "An Army of One," an interview with Craig Keener, Larry Osborne and Mark Driscoll, in "Leadership" [Spring 2005], p.42

Consequently, in the twenty-first century the United States will need a variety of multicultural interracial churches. Missiologist Charles Chaney observes, "America will not be won to Christ by establishing more churches like the majority we now have."⁷¹ In an increasingly multiethnic and urban society it will take new multiethnic churches to reach the full spectrum of peoples a sovereign God has brought to our continent. The twenty-first century holds great promise and exciting potential for congregations that are intentionally intercultural. The most recent research reveals that though multiethnic congregations are still "few and far between," their numbers are steadily growing. A pioneering nationwide study by a team led by Michael Emerson, a sociologist at Rice University, has found that ethnically mixed churches number 5.5 percent of Christian bodies.⁷² The cutting edge for mission and church growth in this

⁷¹ Cited in *A Guide for Planting Multicultural Churches* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1999), 6.

⁷² Curtiss Paul DeYoung, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim, *United by Faith: the Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 74.

These researchers define a "mixed" congregation as one in which no one racial group is 80% or more of the congregation. Actually Emerson's team calculated that overall just 7.5% of America's 300,000 *religious* congregations are racially mixed. But the percentage for *Christian* bodies drops to 5.5%. Overall, the study found 7% of Protestant congregations nationally are "mixed." Integrated Protestant churches tend to be those that are theologically conservative and nondenominational. Surprisingly, among mainline denominational churches, only 2 to 3% are mixed on average. Furthermore these researchers calculate that half of America's racially mixed churches are *mixed only temporarily* as they transition from one group to another (2003, 2). For specific examples and descriptions of the growing number of multiracial churches in America, see DeYoung et al. (71-96); also Charles R. Foster and Theodore Brelsford, *We Are the Church: Cultural Diversity in Congregational Life* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1996); Charles R. Foster, *Embracing Diversity* (Alban

century will no doubt be a movement toward more multiracial assemblies. A growing body of literature is now available to convince church leaders and missionaries of the biblical imperative⁷³ and the many practical reasons⁷⁴ for establishing

Institute, 1997); Michael Pocock & Joseph Henriques, *Cultural Change & Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002); Robb Redman, *The Great Worship Awakening* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002); George Yancey, *One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003); Kenneth Davis, "Multicultural Church Planting Models" in *The Journal of Ministry & Theology* 7:1 (Spring 2003): 114-127; Tony Matthews, *There's More Than One Color in the Pew* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2003); David A. Anderson, *Multicultural Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004); Michael O. Emerson, *People of the Dream: Multiracial Congregations in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2006); Mark DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-ethnic Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007) .

⁷³ For other authors discussing the biblical /theological basis for both racial reconciliation and the need for multiethnic churches see Stephen A. Rhodes, *Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998); Norman Peart, *Separate No More* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000); DeYoung et al. (2003, 9-37); and DeYmaz (2007, 3-37). For building a theology of race/ethnicity, see Kenneth Davis, "Building a Biblical Theology of Ethnicity for Global Mission" in *The Journal of Ministry & Theology* 7.2 (Fall 2003): 91-126; and J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003). To understand the biblical rationale for reaching unreached ethnic groups (or *ethne* = peoples = "nations") see John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993, 167-218). Piper (1993) best summarizes God's overarching missiological purpose: "God's great goal in all history is to uphold and display the glory of His name for the enjoyment of His people from all the nations."

⁷⁴ For solid current discussions of both the demographic and sociological rationale for multicultural churches see George Yancey, *Beyond Black and White: Reflections on Racial Reconciliation* (1996); Stephen Rhodes, *Where the Nations Meet* (1998); Manuel Ortiz, *One New People: Models for Establishing a Multiethnic Church* (1999); Yancey, *One Body* (2003); and Emerson, *People of the Dream* (2006).

multiethnic churches. Perhaps the most convincing rationale for pursuing multicultural congregations is the premise that these bodies “can play an important role in reducing racial division and inequality” in our land and therefore should be, when possible, a worthy goal for Christians to pursue.⁷⁵

Emerson, DeYoung et al. (2003, 99-127) give one of the better recent summaries of the rationale for homogenous churches, citing historical and present-day arguments commonly used by Asian Americans, Native Americans, African Americans and white church leaders for racially separate churches. In response, they present a solid case for multiracial churches, citing numerous pragmatic, theological, cultural and sociological reasons (128-144). Most of the pragmatic reasons for building multicultural churches can be boiled down to one basic premise: culturally and racially mixed congregations make a stronger statement to a watching world about the power of the Gospel. For other arguments for maintaining racial boundaries in congregational life/worship, see Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980 rev); C. Peter Wagner, *Our Kind of People* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979); and Lincoln (1999, xxiv). By contrast, others see homogenous churches as contributing to the “racialization” of society. See Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race* (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2000); René Padilla, “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 6:1 (January, 1982); and Bruce W. Fong, *Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996).

⁷⁵ DeYoung et al (2003, 3). The release of *Divided By Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race* (Emerson and Smith 2000), raised lots of concern in the evangelical Christian community showing how theology, history, and the very structure of religious organizations often combine in powerful ways to divide American Christians along racial lines. This book also demonstrated how the consequent separate congregations have many negative consequences perpetrating division and inequality. The more recent publication of *United By Faith: The Multiracial Congregation As An Answer To The Problem of Race* (DeYoung et al. 2003), is meant to show that multiracial congregations can have the opposite effect. The book is based on the multiethnic team of authors’ three years of intensive

Before we seek to develop a multiethnic church or ministry, however, it is vital that we remind ourselves of the biblical imperative for multiethnic ministry. It is essential that our outreach motivation, strategy plans and ministry implementation be thoroughly grounded on the Word of God and not driven by demographics, pragmatism or expediency. The staggering diversity of our postmodern world will overwhelm us unless we are fortified by a careful understanding of God's plan and purpose for ethnic diversity.

research, funded by Lilly Endowment, studying both multiracial and uniraical congregations. The "Congregational Project," based at Rice University, is believed to be the first large study focusing on racial and ethnic diversity within Christian houses of worship. The project began with a telephone survey of 2,500 Americans about their congregations. Nearly 500 of these churches, selected at random, were sent mail surveys. Researchers then visited 30 churches in four metro areas – Houston, Los Angeles and unnamed cities in the Midwest and Northeast. Of these visited the team concluded only 18 of these were truly "multiracial

Which Are The New Covenant Passages in the Old Testament?

Part One

*Dr. David Fredrickson
Site Director and Academic Coordinator
Assistant Professor of Theology
Western Seminary Sacramento
Sacramento, California*

BRIEF MODELS FOR IDENTIFYING THE OLD TESTAMENT, NEW COVENANT PASSAGES

Evangelical scholarship has done little to develop working models for systematically identifying the New Covenant (NC) passages in the Old Testament (OT). The result has been predictable—consensus regarding the precise elements of the NC has eluded evangelical students of the NC, partially because the discussion has been plagued with differing, briefly justified enumerations of the relevant OT passages to begin with.¹

¹ Recent examples may include Femi Adeyemi, “What Is the New Covenant ‘Law’ in Jeremiah 31:33?”, *BSac* 163, no. 651 (Summer 2006): 314; Thomas Edward McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 90; Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 49, 151; Dirk H. Odendaal, *The Eschatological Expectation of Isaiah 40–66 with Special Reference to Israel and the Nations* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 131; Russell L. Penney, “The Relationship of the Church to the New Testament,” *Conservative Theological Journal* 2, no. 7 (Dec 1998): 461; Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 112–13; and John Whitcomb, “Christ’s Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1985): 205.

The few models offered for methodically surfacing NC passages in the OT have been generally ignored by other students of the NC, at least in print. Part one of this article summarizes and critiques five brief models published in the last fifty years, part two summarizes and critiques two extended models, and part three proposes a new model for surfacing the NC passages in the OT.

The “Formative Model” of Walter C. Kaiser

Walter Kaiser effectively surfaced for modern evangelicalism the issue of the make-up of the NC according to the OT by cataloging in 1972 and again in 1978 “the sixteen or seventeen major” OT passages referencing the NC.² Perhaps it is a measure of Kaiser’s stature among evangelical scholars that his words nearly ended that discussion before it began—subsequent writings regarding the NC elements and passages in the OT have most often simply accepted Kaiser’s enumeration.³

² Walter C. Kaiser, “The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34,” *JETS* 15, no. 1 (Winter 1972): 14, and Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34,” in *The Bible in Its Literary Milieu*, ed. John Maier and Vincent Tollers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 109, 117.

³ Writers who have relied on Kaiser’s enumeration of OT, NC passages with little or no additional development include Adeyemi, “What is the New Covenant ‘Law,’” 314; Penney, “Relationship of the Church,” 461; Bruce Ware, “The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 69. In some cases there is no footnote, but instead an allusive nod to Kaiser via reuse of his designation *locus classicus* for the Jeremiah 31 passage, as appears to be the case with R. Bruce Compton, “Dispensationalism, the Church, and the New Covenant,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 8 (Fall 2003): 11.

As well, they have generally followed without discussion Kaiser's lead in limiting OT, NC passages to the writing prophets.⁴

Kaiser's classic enumeration of OT passages is as follows:

The only place in the Old Testament where the expression "new covenant" occurs is Jeremiah 31:31. However it would appear that the idea is much more widespread. Based on similar content and contexts, the following expressions can be equated with the new covenant: the "everlasting covenant" in seven passages {Jer. 32:40; 50:5; Ezek. 16:60; 37:26; Isa. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8}, a "new heart" or a "new spirit" in three or four passages {Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26; Jer. 32:39 (LXX)}, the "covenant of peace" in three passages {Isa. 54:10; Ezek. 34:25; 37:26}, and "a covenant" or "my covenant" which is placed "in that day" in three passages {Isa. 42:6; 49:8; Hos. 2:18–20; Isa. 59:21. For additional passages on the new covenant see Stefan Porubcan, *Sin in the Old Testament: a Soteriological Study* (Rome: Slovak

Writers who have developed Kaiser's enumeration further include Larry D. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 31; and Paul R. Thorsell, "The Spirit in the Present Age: Preliminary Fulfillment of the Predicted New Covenant According to Paul," *JETS* 41, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 398. Rodney Decker ("The Church's Relationship to the New Covenant—Part One," *BSac* 152, no. 607 [Summer 1995]: 294) acknowledges Kaiser's list of passages but questions two Isaiah passages. Darrell Bock ("Covenants in Progressive Dispensationalism," in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999], 189) and Saucy (*Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 112–13) do not reference Kaiser but list nearly the same NC verses and the expression-based criteria for their selection. Elliott Johnson ("Covenants in Traditional Dispensationalism," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 131) references the Bruce Ware article above, which itself begins with the Kaiser model.

⁴ John R. Master ("The New Covenant," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, ed. John R. Master and Wesley R. Willis [Chicago: Moody, 1994], 93–110), John H. Sailhamer (*Introduction to Old Testament Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995], 99), and Whitcomb ("Christ's Atonement," 205) are among the minority who have argued for the presence of NC elements earlier in the OT.

Institute, 1963), 481–512}—making a grand total of sixteen or seventeen major passages on the new covenant.⁵

Kaiser briefly describes his criteria for capturing NC passages outside of Jeremiah 31, as being the presence of “similar content and contexts.” After referencing his first category, that of passages with the name *new covenant* (which involves only Jeremiah 31), Kaiser captures additional NC passages based upon whether they incorporate any one (or more, presumably) of the following four expressions: (1) *eternal covenant*, (2) *new heart* or *new spirit*, (3) *covenant of peace*, or

⁵ Kaiser, “Old Promise,” and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34,” 14; cf. Kaiser, “Old Promise,” 109, 117. The brackets in the quotation indicate the location, plus text, of Kaiser’s footnotes within the quotation.

Stefan Porubcan, whom Kaiser acknowledges above as his primary source, is somewhat of an odd progenitor for Kaiser’s position regarding the elements and passages of the NC in the OT. Porubcan’s Catholic, replacement theology in regards to national Israel and the NT church informed Porubcan’s criterion for identifying NC passages, leading him to declare that the NC in the prophets is primarily soteriological, predicting the expanding and deepening of the provision of divine forgiveness to God’s people which the NT teaches as fulfilled in the church (Stefan Porubcan, *Sin in the Old Testament: a Soteriological Study* [Rome: Slovak Institute, 1963], 483, 488, 503, 511). From that broad, theological understanding of the NC in the prophets, Porubcan established the criterion that any prophetic passage referring either to an eschatological covenant or to a heightened quality of salvation is a NC passage. Not surprisingly Porubcan found the NC in many of the OT prophets, beyond what Kaiser would recognize (*Ibid.*, 487, 503, 504); examples are Daniel 9, Zechariah 13, and Malachi 3–4.

Kaiser indirectly acknowledges his evangelical divergence from Porubcan by offering different criteria for identifying NC passages (“similar content and contexts”), as well as a shorter list of NC passages. Nevertheless, Porubcan’s influence by way of Kaiser on modern evangelicalism’s assumptions regarding the elements and passages of the NC in the OT highlights a significant gap in evangelical scholarship regarding an accepted model for establishing OT passages as NC passages.

(4) *a covenant* or *my covenant* linked with *in that day*.⁶ Because most of these phrases do appear in Jeremiah 31 and Kaiser does specify Jeremiah 31 as his *locus classicus*, one could certainly envision the genesis of Kaiser's model as involving first the acceptance of Jeremiah 31 as a NC passage, followed by the observation of key, descriptive terms or phrases in the passage, and finally the seeking out of the same key elements in other OT passages.

The utility of Kaiser's second-to-last expression *covenant of peace* is not clear. The phrase does not appear in Jeremiah 31, though that passage does promise personal, spiritual peace and corporate, military peace with other terms. The difficulty is that one or both of these senses of peace are present in all of the named biblical covenants, including the conditional Mosaic covenant.⁷ The first time the label בְּרִיתִי שְׁלוֹם ("covenant of peace") appears in the prophets, YHWH was assuring Israel by way of Isaiah that his loyal love is unending:

'For this is like the days of Noah to Me, When I swore that the waters of Noah Would not flood the earth again; So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you Nor will I rebuke you. For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, And My covenant of peace will not be shaken,' Says the LORD who has compassion on you. O afflicted one, storm-tossed, *and* not comforted, Behold, I

⁶ Kaiser, "Old Promise," 14.

⁷ The biblical covenant in fact that is best positioned of all to lay claim to the label *covenant of peace* is a one linked to the Mosaic covenant. This lesser-known covenant of YHWH with the Levitical priest Phinehas properly claims the earliest use of the label in Scripture, as its actual name: "Therefore say, 'Behold, I give him My covenant of peace; and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the sons of Israel'" (Num 25:12–13). It is ironic for the Kaiser model, that the label *covenant of peace* in fact surfaces some passages linked to the Mosaic covenant—the covenant to which Jeremiah 31 explicitly contrasts the NC.

will set your stones in antimony, And your foundations I will lay in sapphires. (Isa 54:9–11)

That unending love is apparent in all the unconditional covenants, such as the Noahic which YHWH explicitly mentions here, as well as the Abrahamic and the Davidic covenants. As it is not unique to NC passages, it seems best to understand a *covenant of peace* as a “subset provision” that is included within several broader covenants from YHWH.

The efficacy of Kaiser’s first and last expressions—*eternal covenant*, and *a covenant* or *my covenant* linked with *in that day*—is equally unclear. Logically, it seems that these expressions could capture any covenant that is linked to the Eschaton by OT prophets. If one were to view all the biblical covenants relevant to the Eschaton as expressions of a single, generic eschatological covenant for which *new covenant* is the referred name, as indeed some do,⁸ then these would be

⁸ Odendaal (*Eschatological Expectation of Isaiah 40–66*, 131) and Porubcan (*Sin in the Old Testament*, 487, 503, 504) were mentioned above as adherents to this view. Unquestionably the named, unconditional covenants of the OT are activated in a coordinated, perhaps even seamless manner in the Eschaton as described by the prophets. In that sense these covenants represent a single divine program. On the other hand, there are signature elements in each of the named unconditional covenants which appear to resist amalgamation at the hands of both the OT and NT writers. As an example: individual, internal transformation by way of Spirit indwelling seems to be a signature element of the NC. So while the Spirit is mentioned in Isaiah 11, there he has the secondary, background role of energizing the Davidic ruler. The Davidic rule is the focus of this passage, not the Spirit, and his activities seem not to be a signature element of the Davidic covenant. So it seems Isaiah 11 should be understood as a “Davidic covenant passage,” not a NC passage.

One can argue that the positive outcomes nationally of Davidic rule in Isaiah 11 are contingent upon the activation of the Spirit’s transforming work as described in the NC. But this shows that the Davidic covenant and the NC are interdependent, not that the latter has subsumed the former.

efficacious categories. For those who recognize distinctions between multiple, named and distinguishable covenants that are linked to the Eschaton by writing prophets however,⁹ these two categories seem improperly broad.

In regards to Kaiser's first expression **בְּרִית עוֹלָם** ("eternal covenant"), it is likely that Jeremiah 32:40, which Kaiser captured by this phrase, does refer to the NC. In fact, it offers an excellent summary of what had been detailed in Jeremiah 31: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me." On the other hand, Isaiah 24:5, which is captured by same expression, seems just as clearly to refer to the Noahic covenant. There YHWH declares that all humankind has broken a covenant made prior: "The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 24:5). Regarding Isa 55:3 and 61:8, it seems those passages both refer to the Davidic covenant. Thus, it seems the label **בְּרִית עוֹלָם** ("eternal covenant") can be attached to multiple, named covenants. Surprisingly, narrowing the final category (passages involving the temporal expression **בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא** ["in that day"]) from passages that are generally eschatological to those passages that use this precise temporal label, shortens the list to only Hosea 2:18–20. It is difficult to link this passage to any one of the named OT covenants in particular. The passage highlights a future "covenant of peace" to be made for Israel with wildlife, which is more clearly an event related to the rule of Davidic Messiah in Isaiah 11 than to the activation of the NC described in Jeremiah 31, although admittedly the Hosea passage mentions spiritual rejuvenation as a secondary element. It seems best to take this covenant of peace as a recognized sub-element of more than one named OT

⁹ Such as the NC in Jeremiah 31 and the Davidic covenant in Jeremiah 33.

covenant, per the discussion above of the “covenants of peace” in the OT.¹⁰

Thus the first, third, and fourth expressions that Kaiser offers for identifying NC passages in the OT seem improperly broad. Working from Kaiser’s own overarching criteria of “similar content and context,” these expressions capture some passages that seem clearly to refer to the NC, but as well capture other passages that seem to refer to other named, OT covenants that are active in the Eschaton in addition to the NC. Perhaps these three expressions of Kaiser can serve as a “first filter” for surfacing potential NC passages, but additional criteria are needed to further cull the list of passages down to a list of passages describing the NC in distinction from other named OT covenants. One could suggest other first filters that require an additional filter, such as the phraseology involving YHWH being “their God” and Israel being “my people,” which captures both Mosaic covenant passages (Exod 29:45; Lev 26:45) and prospective NC passages (Jer 24:7; 31:33; 32:38; Ezek 37:23, 27) in the OT.

The second expression *new heart* or *new spirit* does appear to capture successfully other passages that refer to the NC of Jeremiah 31 in terms of Kaiser’s criteria of similar content and context.¹¹ These passages are Jeremiah 32:39 (LXX); Ezekiel 11:19; 18:31; 36:26.¹² The efficacy of this category is further validated by the fact that if and when the criterion of *verbal*

¹⁰ Isaiah seems to use the label *covenant of peace* for the Noahic covenant in Isaiah 54, and he links the concept of both individual, internal peace and corporate, external peace with the Davidic and other covenants in 9:7; 32:17–18; 54:13; 55:12; and 66:12.

¹¹ Kaiser, “Old Promise,” 14.

¹² The exception is Kaiser’s reference to Ezekiel 18:31, in which YHWH calls on current Israel to reform their own hearts, more in keeping it seems with the Mosaic covenant.

adherence to the key expression is broadened to *conceptual* adherence on the part of candidate OT passages, then the category captures other seemingly valid NC passages that appear elsewhere in Kaiser's list.¹³ This group involves Isaiah 59:21; Jeremiah 32:40; 50:5; Ezekiel 16:60–62; 37:26–27. Each reflects the concept of individual, internal, spiritual transformation of Israelites.

The remaining passages in Kaiser's list are those that are improperly captured by his categories, because they seem to refer to other covenants or are not clearly similar to Jeremiah 31. They are Isaiah 24:5; 42:6; 49:8; 55:3; 54:10; Ezekiel 34:25.

The failure of Kaiser's model to capture the Joel 2:28–29 passage provides another interesting point of analysis for the model. The passage speaks of the distinct action of the Spirit on humankind "in those days" and at least implies inner spiritual transformation of his beneficiaries, as the Spirit has been poured out on them and has caused them to experience visions and dreams. Had Kaiser listed *the Spirit* as one of his key expressions for capturing NC passages, as many students of the NC in the OT would, Joel 2 it seems would have been captured as a NC passage. Kaiser did not list *the Spirit* as a qualifying expressio, however, even though many of his sixteen or seventeen passages include it, presumably because the Jeremiah 31 passage from which he culled most of his key expressions does not. On the other hand, Kaiser included in his criteria other expressions beyond *the Spirit* that are absent from Jeremiah 31, but only when they involve the word *covenant*. Given that all of those parameters have proven to be overly broad, there is certainly a basis for questioning whether the list of key expressions could be improved by way of both selective deletions and additions.

Nevertheless, the Kaiser model does a good job of capturing NC passages in the OT, given its brevity and simplicity. The

¹³ Larry Pettegrew makes this modification—see Pettegrew's "modified Kaiser model" below.

utility of the model is perhaps most clearly seen when the model is compared to other contemporary models, which are generally more complex and rarely as accurate in capturing and omitting appropriate OT passages.

The “Generic Eschatological Model” of R. Bruce Compton

R. Bruce Compton offered his model in his *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* article “Dispensationalism, the Church, and the New Covenant.”¹⁴ Compton’s work, particularly his earlier doctoral dissertation, has received attention from several other students of the NC,¹⁵ though his methodology is highlighted more in his article.

While Compton considers Jeremiah 31 as the proper first passage as does Kaiser, Compton offers more of a “prolegomena” than does Kaiser by discussing selection criteria before discussing selected passages. Compton’s first criterion for NC passages in the OT is that the passage needs to treat the NC as an “identifiable entity,” which for him distinguishes his approved passages from all those earlier than the writing prophets that may admittedly involve “antecedent trajectories” towards the NC.¹⁶ Compton’s second criterion is that the NC passage will mention by label a *covenant*, and thirdly that it will

¹⁴ Compton, “Dispensationalism,” 3–48.

¹⁵ Compton’s unpublished dissertation (Bruce R. Compton, “An Examination of the New Covenant in the Old and New Testaments” [unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, May 1986]) has been cited by, among others, Adeyemi (“What is the New Covenant ‘Law’ in Jeremiah 31:33?”, 320), Rodney J. Decker (“The Church’s Relationship to the New Covenant—Part Two,” *BSac* 152, no. 608 [Fall 1995]: 441, 447–49, 451–53), Robert McCabe (“The Meaning of ‘Born Of Water and the Spirit’ in John 3:5,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 4 [Fall 1999]: 90), Penney (“Relationship of the Church,” 464), and Pettegrew (*New Covenant Ministry*, 31).

¹⁶ Compton, “Dispensationalism, the Church, and the New Covenant,” 10.

be by context future, specifically eschatological. The bases for these criteria are not given. The criteria are effective pragmatically, in that they allow Compton to quickly delineate a core of NC passages. Theologically, their utility is not as clear. The above review of Kaiser's model has shown that such criteria are prone to surface passages which may or may not be referring to the NC, and further examination of Compton's model bears this out.

On the basis of these three criteria Compton begins with Jeremiah 31:31 because it specifies the NC by name, and Compton states that there are an additional twelve NC passages: "Hos 2:18; Isa 42:6; 49:8; 54:10; 55:3; 59:21; 61:8; Jer 32:40; 50:5 (cf. 24:4-7); and Ezek 16:60; 34:25; 37:26 (cf. 11:14-21; 36:22-33)."¹⁷ Compton states that each of the thirteen passages have in common the following five elements, beginning with two of the three criteria that led to the actual selection of the thirteen passages: a covenant is mentioned, the covenant is future and eschatological, Israel faces national judgment and dispersion, Israel is afterward restored to its homeland, and Israel experiences great material and spiritual blessings.

At this juncture in the model's development some issues regarding passage selection arise. First, criteria two and three, also listed as the first and second elements in the list of "five commonalities" to the thirteen passages, seem unduly broad. Any reference in the OT prophets to the activity of other unconditional covenants (the Abrahamic and Davidic, for example) in the Eschaton would be captured by those two criteria.¹⁸ Collecting OT passages referring to the covenant of

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ One could reply that there are in fact the original three criteria plus an additional three, listed as the third through fifth elements in the list of five commonalities, which together will resolve the problem of criteria breadth, but Compton specifies that he surfaced the third through fifth elements of that list *after* he had identified the thirteen initial passages by way of the three earlier criteria.

Compton exercises the same two criteria in his dissertation. There he does acknowledge the potential problem for his criteria of improperly capturing references to covenants other than the NC, due

Jeremiah 31 by the three criteria of this model could in actuality collect all passages making any reference to any biblical covenant relevant to the Eschaton of Israel, regardless of the passages' relation to descriptions of the NC. Even using all five of Compton's criteria would seem to result in one's capturing a broad range of such references. To put it another way, it is hard to see how YHWH could have spoken in the OT prophets regarding activity originating from any covenant and could have located the activity temporally by referring to key events in Israel's Eschaton, without it later being captured as a NC passage, by these criteria.

For Compton the new list of NC elements derived from the three Jeremiah passages doubled both as an amendment to his description of NC elements, and as an amendment to his list of selection criteria. Nor was the expanded list of criteria, now nine in number, stabilized at this point—as Compton assimilates additional OT passages to his “stable” of NC passages, his list of criteria for identifying NC passages expands further as well. Thus, for example, when Compton turns to his six candidate passages in Isaiah, he considers the degree of overlap between the elements of those Isaianic passages and his current list of

to the criteria's breadth: “Excluded from exegetical consideration are Zech 9:11 and Mal 3:1. Although both mention the word ‘covenant,’ neither offers sufficient information to identify clearly which covenant is in view nor are they able to advance the concerns of this study” (Compton, “Examination of the New Covenant,” 5n3).

However Compton's later article clarifies that, unfortunately, Compton is not concerned with improperly capturing eschatological expressions of covenants other than the NC, but only concerned with capturing OT references to *non*-eschatological covenants: “Two additional passages which mention the term ‘covenant,’ Zech 9:11 and Mal 3:1, have not been included. In both, the information provided for the identification of the covenant is insufficient to determine *whether the reference is to a future covenant or to an antecedent covenant*” (emphasis mine) (Compton, “Dispensationalism,” 10).

nine criteria.¹⁹ All the Isaianic passages are validated as NC passages because they overlap to some degree with those nine criteria.

With the six Isaianic passages now “in the NC stable,” Compton considers whether any of those additional passages suggest additional NC elements not seen in the Jeremiah passages, which should then be used to “cast the net” of NC criteria still wider as the search for other NC passages continues. He concludes that the list of elements within the NC of the writing prophets should as a result be expanded from nine to fourteen to include the Isaianic Servant of YHWH, the role of the Servant as *covenant mediator*, Gentile enlightenment, the identity of the Servant as a Davidic ruler, and the Davidic promises reflected in Isaiah 11.

Compton uses the same “expanding criteria” approach to his evaluation of the Ezekiel passages which mention a discrete eschatological covenant, measuring their overlap with the fourteen criteria in play since the evaluation of the Isaiah passages.²⁰ Again, the individual Ezekiel passages are added to the list of NC passages, and then these new passages are reviewed for NC elements that are not evident in the NC passages surfaced in the earlier prophets. At this point, due to Ezekiel 36, the activity of the Spirit is brought into the list of NC elements.

¹⁹ Ibid., 17–20. Intervening between Compton’s discussion of the candidate NC passages in Jeremiah and Isaiah (pages 14–17) is a discussion of Hosea 2:18–20. From this passage Compton discerns two new elements of the NC: the cessation of warfare arising from divine discipline and peace between the nation of Israel and the animal kingdom. Although Compton is not as explicit in regards to assimilating new NC elements from Hosea into his NC selection criteria as he is in regards to assimilating new NC elements from Jeremiah and Isaiah into his NC selection criteria, the Hosea elements may be partially behind his inclusion of Isaiah 54 involving the *covenant of peace* and his mention of Isaiah 11 involving Israel’s peace with and among animals.

²⁰ Ibid., 21–23.

Interestingly, Compton does not at this juncture conduct a second sweep of Jeremiah, armed with the additional NC elements found in Hosea, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. It seems that had he done so, his final list of NC passages from Jeremiah could have been larger. In fact, it seems that the reason that several passages referring to David or Davidic descendents are captured from Isaiah and Ezekiel by the method, after none were even considered from Jeremiah, is simply because the list of criteria in place when candidate NC passages from Jeremiah were evaluated was shorter relative to the list used to evaluate Isaiah and Ezekiel passages. Nor does Compton continue the search into other prophetic OT books, at least to the point of considering Joel 2:28–29. It would seem that the Joel 2 passage would have been captured due to the involvement of the Spirit described there, since that parameter was assimilated after a survey of Ezekiel.

Because of his expansive approach toward assimilating NC criteria across the OT prophets, it seems certain that Compton's model will label a larger number of OT passages as NC passages relative to the Kaiser model, if the Compton model is applied consistently such that earlier prophetic passages are reconsidered for assimilation as NC passages each time the criteria for inclusion is expanded, and such that all the writing prophets receive full attention.

It would seem that the expansive character of the model is not in and of itself a model flaw since the degree of contextual similarity and content overlap required among approved NC passages by any model that is employed is arguably a subjective decision on the part of the model designer. However, there do seem to be two objective flaws to the model. The first flaw is theological: not enough attention is given to the possibility that the activity of a named divine covenant could be in view in a prophetic passage, that is not the NC. For theologies that hold that the NC has consummated or replaced all other divine covenants that is not a problem, but it is for the theology of Compton.

The second flaw to Compton's model is structural: the model's criteria expand each time the model is applied to additional Bible books and surfaces additional NC passages. This

was seen above, as Compton applied a list of qualifying criteria to potential Ezekiel passages that was four times longer than the list of criteria used to evaluate Jeremiah. In a sense, this design flaw is fatal—the task of evaluating the writing OT prophets for the presence of NC passages can never be completed using this model. The criteria are continuously expanding, so that for the results to be considered complete, the Bible books evaluated first need to be re-examined for new candidate passages each time the list of criteria expands.

The “Minimalist Model” of John R. Master

John Master’s approach to identifying the elements and passages of the NC in the OT in the 1994 book *Issues in Dispensationalism* is unique in two ways.²¹ First, he indicates no dependency on prior approaches to discerning the NC in the OT—he stands apart from the majority of current, evangelical NC students who begin with the comments of Kaiser or others.²² Second, with few exceptions Masters refers not to the NC, but to the NC “of Jeremiah 31.” By the end of his presentation, Master has made it clear that for him Jeremiah 31:31–34 is the single, primary passage regarding the NC in the OT. Master does not make clear in his the article his justification for giving preeminence to the Jeremiah 31 passage, beyond observing that it is the only OT passage to offer the specific label *new covenant*. Additional justification seems called for since during the same discussion Master lists passages which for him reflect clearly the

²¹ Master, “New Covenant,” 93-110.

²² Examples of other recent writers who indicate no dependence on prior models are Homer Kent (“The New Covenant and the Church,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6, no. 2 [Fall 1985]: 289–98) and John McClean (“The Prophets as Covenant Enforcers: Illustrated in Zephaniah,” *Michigan Theological Journal* 5 [Spring/Fall 1994]: 5–25).

Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, even though none of those passages offers a formal, covenantal label for those covenants.²³

While there are other OT passages that bear mentioning, they offer “allusions” to this passage for Master.²⁴ Perhaps the first member of the list is Deuteronomy 30:6, which “mentions ... the need for this inner transformation and the work for God ... well before the revelation of the new covenant to Jeremiah.”²⁵ Master mentions a total of five additional passages from Isaiah 11 and Isaiah 32, Ezekiel 36, Joel 2–3, and Zechariah 12, all in connection with the possibility of full new covenant obedience he sees clearly presented in Jeremiah 31:31–34 (see their itemization below).

Master’s unique “hierarchy” for OT passages referencing the NC, involving the lone Jeremiah 31 passage complemented by other allusive texts, leads to a similarly distinctive process for identifying the NC in the OT. Delineating the key elements of the NC is a brief and straightforward task since Master sidesteps the problem of differing emphases regarding the NC being reflected by differing primary NC passages. From the Jeremiah 31 passage Master itemizes just two primary elements for the NC: it is to replace the Mosaic covenant (Jer 31:32), and its recipients will be obeying God’s commands because of a “unilateral divine change” in them (Jer 31:33).²⁶

Master twice re-emphasizes the latter NC element: “God intends to work in the lives of the Israelites so that they will finally and fully obey the commands of God that will lead to their entering into the fullness of God’s blessings and the blessings of the Promised Land” and secondly, “In the Old

²³ There could be pragmatic reasons for focusing on a single OT passage in this context—it simplifies the description of the NC in the OT, and it brings to the fore the NC passage most quoted by the NT regarding the NC. But none of these is offered by Master.

²⁴ Master, “New Covenant,” 96.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 96–97.

Testament, the emphasis of the new covenant seems to relate to the work of God in the lives of the Israelites that will make them obedient to the commands of God as found in the Old Testament.”²⁷ Master’s emphasis on the perceived outcome of the inner, personal transformation that emanates from the NC, a complete obedience to God’s commands, rather than upon the inner transformation itself, is also distinctive relative to the typical NC descriptions offered by others. Master supports this emphasis via OT passages that perhaps are from the secondary, allusive NC passages. These reflect, like Jeremiah 31, “a new possibility, created by God himself, of realizing the will of God in human life.” Isaiah 11:9; 32:15–17; Ezekiel 36:26–27; Joel 2:28, 32; and Zechariah 12:10 emphasize to varying degrees the indwelling of the Spirit, internal spiritual transformation, and corporate obedience and righteousness.²⁸

It does not seem that the Joel 2–3 passage deserves inclusion on the basis of a perfect obedience among the beneficiaries. Rather, the Joel 2–3 passage should be included in Master’s list via a different, third criterion of his described below, the emphasis on the transforming ministry of the Spirit. Master’s identification of the stated replacement of the Mosaic covenant as an element of the NC of Jeremiah 31 is a valuable contribution because while that element is overlooked by others, it is helpful for distinguishing NC, OT passages from OT passages referring to the eschatological activity of other named unconditional covenants. On the other hand, the second key element of the NC which Master identifies seems to be of mixed value. It does not seem that any of the passages that Master itemizes clearly specify a punctiliar versus progressive shift to

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 97–98.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

full obedience on the part of those transformed.²⁹ In most cases the passages seem to emphasize more the internal transformation itself rather than a behavioral outcome of perfect obedience, punctiliar or otherwise.

Master does discuss the internal transformation itself in terms of the part played by God's Spirit, which seems to be for Master a third element of the NC. It is at this point that a complication for Master's "minimalist" approach to constructing his model, recognizing only Jeremiah 31 as a primary NC passage, arises. In order for Master to highlight the NC role of the Spirit, he must leave the confines of "the new covenant of Jer 31:31-34." This he does by raising Ezekiel 36 to a kind of intermediate status relative to his other secondary passages by appealing to extra-biblical grounds. While Master observes, in faithfulness to his own criterion, that "the term *new covenant*" is not used in the Ezekiel 36 passage, thus making its "connection" to the NC of Jeremiah 31 "circumstantial," he appeals to the fact that this connection is "generally, if not universally, acknowledged."³⁰ Master's identification of the role of the Spirit as an element of the NC, in spite of its absence in Jeremiah 31, is a valuable contribution because the central involvement of the

²⁹ Ibid., 109, n. 7. Master footnotes progressive dispensationalist Robert Saucy who disagrees and sees a progressive shift towards obedience for beneficiaries of the NC (Saucy, *Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 32). Unfortunately, this note could lead Master's readers to infer falsely that all or even most traditional dispensationalists support Master's interpretation of punctiliar, new covenant obedience as an outcome of the Holy Spirit's ministry under the NC.

This emphasis on immediate, full obedience at the point of internal transformation on the part of NC recipients could be seen as a minor distinctive in Master's presentation, except for the fact that it later undergirds a key point of his chapter: since members of the NT church are not exercising NC (that is, complete) obedience, it is therefore evident that the NT church is not experiencing a fulfillment to any degree of the NC.

³⁰ Master, "New Covenant," 97. Master does not further delineate those providing this consensus.

Spirit is helpful for distinguishing NC passages from those referring to the eschatological activity of other divine covenants.

Master's conservative approach to identifying passages and elements of the NC in the OT serves to highlight weaknesses of "generic eschatological" models such as Compton's above, which amass a great number of loosely related texts as expressions of the NC and have as their outcome an amorphous aggregate of covenantal impulses. Master succeeds in surfacing a small number of covenantal characteristics that both reflect primary elements of the NC and help to delineate the NC from other divine, covenantal activity in the Eschaton. At the same time, Master's model for ascertaining the NC elements from "the" NC passage is ultimately unworkable, in that he is forced to suspend the strictures within his model in order to qualify the explicit involvement of the Holy Spirit as a primary element of the "NC of Jeremiah 31."

The "Modified Kaiser Model" of Larry D. Pettegrew

Another category that captures a number of brief models from evangelicals for establishing the proper list of NC passages in the OT is the Kaiser model with modifications. Larry D. Pettegrew provides such a model in his 1999 *Masters Seminary Journal* article, "The New Covenant," and his 2001 book, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (2nd ed.).³¹

The "Earlier Pettegrew" Model. In his article "The New Covenant" Pettegrew begins, as did both Kaiser and Compton, with Jeremiah 31 because of its expression new covenant, and then speaks of "parallel passages."³² Though Pettegrew does not explicitly define that label, a footnote lays out his strategy for

³¹ Larry D. Pettegrew, "The New Covenant," *The Masters Seminary Journal* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 251–70. The two sources warrant separate examination, because a comparison indicates that Pettegrew's model for selecting NC passages has undergone some development in the intervening years.

³² *Ibid.*, 252.

surfacing the parallel NC passages. Echoing Kaiser, Pettegrew suggests:

“Other names for the New Covenant include an “everlasting covenant” (Jer 32:40: ‘And I will make an everlasting covenant with them ...’), ‘covenant of peace’ (Ezek 37:26: ‘And I will make a covenant of peace with them...’), and ‘my covenant’ or ‘a covenant’ (Hos 2:18–20). Cf. Bruce Ware, ‘The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,’ *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 69, and Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., ‘The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34,’ *JETS* 15 (Winter 1972): 14.”³³

Relative to Kaiser, Pettegrew mentions the same labels in the same order except that he limited Kaiser’s list of “tell-tale” expressions to those that are apparent synonyms for the Jeremiah 31 label *new covenant* in particular, deleting Kaiser’s expressions *new heart*, *new spirit*, and *in that day* as additional criteria for surfacing parallel NC passages. As well, Pettegrew omits all the Isaiah passages in Kaiser’s list, labeling them later in his article as passages that describe an event (the coming of “a perfect mediatorial king, the Lord Jesus Christ”) that will be both concurrent with, and a co-requisite for, the activation of the NC blessings.³⁴

The contribution from Bruce Ware, the second source Pettegrew mentions alongside Kaiser regarding “parallel passages,” is not easy to ascertain—perhaps Pettegrew notes Ware because Ware repeats the classic Kaiser quotation (in whole) and states his approval: “Kaiser is surely within legitimate bounds to cite these texts as pertaining to the new covenant spoken of in Jer 31:31–34.”³⁵ The net effect of Pettegrew’s consideration and revision of Kaiser’s list is that he makes the first criterion for selecting NC passages the presence

³³ Ibid., 253n5.

³⁴ Ibid., 258–59.

³⁵ Ware, “The People(s) of God,” 69.

of a covenant label that he took to be synonymous with the expression *new covenant* in Jeremiah 31.

As noted in the review above of the Kaiser model, these criteria, the labels *everlasting covenant*, *covenant of peace*, and *my covenant* or *a covenant*, are of mixed value as selective criteria. They will all succeed in surfacing candidate passages for consideration as NC passages, but will also capture clear references to other named covenants. In that sense these covenantal labels can function as an initial filter for candidate passages, but such passages will need a second examination involving additional criteria that can surface passage elements unique to the NC. Pettegrew is aware of this at least in regard to the criterion *everlasting covenant*, which he links also to the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants.³⁶

As indicated in his key footnote above, Pettegrew surfaces by these criteria the additional passages Jeremiah 32:40, Ezekiel 37:26, and Hosea 2:18–20, all members of the Kaiser list. This footnote does not purport to provide a complete list of NC passages, but more likely presents a sampling of references for the criteria it enumerates. As detailed above regarding the “Kaiser model,” the three passages Pettegrew offered here do indeed seem to be NC passages, although supplementary criteria that are actually unique to the NC seem necessary to make that judgment.

In his article Pettegrew then offered a second set of criteria for surfacing other NC texts in the OT. He developed these criteria by way of noting the key elements of the NC as described in the Jeremiah 31 passage. This appears to parallel the approach of Kaiser, in that Kaiser’s list of key labels includes both synonyms for the label *new covenant* and key words that label some of the NC’s elements as described in Jeremiah 31. The six criteria Pettegrew notes, along with the NC passages outside of Jeremiah 31 that he links with each, are the NC is “new” and unlike the Mosaic covenant, it is “everlasting and irrevocable,” it offers an abundance of physical blessings (national gathering, rebuilding of cities, economic prosperity), and it offers the spiritual provisions of internal, individual

³⁶ Pettegrew, “New Covenant,” 254.

transformation (Deut 30:6; Jer 24:4–7; 32:37–41; Ezek 11:17–21; 36:22–32) of a fuller measure of divine forgiveness and of a consummated relationship between God and the people of Israel (Isa 44:5; Jer 24:7; 32:38; Ezek 11:17–20; 34:30; 36:22–23, 28; 37:23, 37).³⁷

It was suggested in the evaluation above of the Kaiser model that the following passages surfaced both by Kaiser and Pettegrew do qualify as NC passages based upon both men's stated criteria: Isaiah 59:21; Jeremiah 31:31–34; 32:40; 50:5; Ezekiel 11:19; 16:60–62; 36:26; 37:26–27. Conversely, the following passages that are surfaced by both models were already examined during the evaluation of the Kaiser model above and were found wanting as NC passages, based on the models' own criteria: Isaiah 24:5; 42:6; 49:8; 55:3; 54:10; Ezekiel 34:25.

Apart from these passages, of particular note are the three passages listed by Pettegrew that Kaiser's model does not surface: Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 24:4–7; and Isa 44:5.³⁸ The Deuteronomy passage could certainly have surfaced in Kaiser's list under the category capturing the expression *new heart*, if Kaiser had made the standard for passages meeting his criteria that of conceptual adherence, and not actual, verbal adherence—Deuteronomy 30:6 speaks of a future “circumcised heart” among individual Israelites. Kaiser does not offer a criterion that would otherwise exclude the Deuteronomy passage as does Compton, who limits NC passages to those which speak of the NC as an identifiable entity as differentiated from passages which reflect antecedent trajectories towards the NC.³⁹ In the same way, the Pettegrew passage Jeremiah 24:4–7

³⁷ Ibid., 255–59. Pettegrew does not offer a total count of these elements; the count offered above reflects the fact that while Pettegrew deals with the elements of physical blessing as a group, he devotes a subtitle and multiple paragraphs to each of the spiritual provisions he discusses.

³⁸ Ibid., 255, 256, 259.

³⁹ Compton, “Dispensationalism,” 10.

would, it seems, have surfaced in Kaiser's list under the category capturing the expression *new heart*, if Kaiser's criteria for candidate passages had been conceptual adherence—Jeremiah 24:7 speaks of future Israelites who have gained a "heart to know Me, ... for they will return to Me with their whole heart."

The final passage selected by Pettegrew as a NC passage but missing from Kaiser's list is an interesting one in terms of its combination of elements:

"Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, "Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen. For I will pour out water on the thirsty *land* And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring And My blessing on your descendants; And they will spring up among the grass Like poplars by streams of water. This one will say, 'I am the LORD'S'; And that one will call on the name of Jacob; And another will write *on* his hand, 'Belonging to the LORD,' And will name Israel's name with honor." (Isa 44:2-5)

Kaiser's criteria do not capture the passage because it does not make specific verbal reference to either a covenant or a "new heart." Certainly however, one can argue for the presence conceptually in this passage of the same covenant that is labeled as the NC in Jeremiah 31—here YHWH unconditionally promises some of the same elements that he "unconditionally covenants" to the same recipients in Jeremiah 31. A similar argument can be made for the presence in concept form of the promised benefit of a new heart—the new, intimate level of relationship with YHWH on the part of individuals that is promised here is presented in Jeremiah 31 as a clear residual of the gaining of a new heart, though the Isaiah passage is without the precise wording that would have surfaced it in the Kaiser model. Third, the passage directly mentions the Spirit of YHWH, who is seen as a key agent of the spiritual blessings in many of the NC passages. The addition to the selection criteria of the Spirit as active agent of individual spiritual transformation is unlike Compton's practice of multiplying criteria each time the accepted list of NC passages expands. Though it is true that the

element of Spirit activity comes from passages outside of the locus classicus of Jeremiah 31, this element appears in multiple NC passages, and most importantly, seems unique to the NC. That is, the Spirit of YHWH as covenantal agent is not emphasized in the passages describing the eschatological activity or fulfillment of other, unconditional OT covenants. Adding the element of Spirit as agent of individual transformation to the NC criteria is not a step toward creating an apparent, generic, all-inclusive, eschatological covenant. Thus, the selection of these three additional passages fits the “spirit” of Kaiser’s categories, even though Kaiser’s precise verbal criteria are not met.

The “early Pettegrew” model for ascertaining NC passages in the OT builds upon, and to some extent improves upon, the Kaiser model. On one hand the Pettegrew model shares the weakness with the Kaiser model of tending to capture OT passages that speak of eschatological, covenantal activity in general because some of the criteria involve covenantal elements that are specifically linked to other covenants, to the exclusion of the NC, in the clearest passages. On the other hand the Pettegrew model improves upon the Kaiser model by capturing valid NC passages that are parallel to the Jeremiah 31 passage conceptually, but not strictly verbally.

The “Later Pettegrew” Model. Pettegrew’s 2001 book, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (2nd ed.) uses the same model for surfacing NC passages in the OT with a few significant revisions.⁴⁰ Early in the book Pettegrew asks, “What then is the new covenant?” After quoting the Jeremiah 31 passage, Pettegrew mentions “other names” for the NC. Relative to his article Pettegrew here follows the Kaiser categories more closely. Rather than first offering a narrower list than Kaiser of terms that Pettegrew deems synonymous to the label *new covenant* as he does in his article and then scanning Jeremiah 31 for other elements in concept form, Pettegrew here collates both kinds of terms, as does Kaiser, into a single list and labels them

⁴⁰ Pettegrew, *New Covenant Ministry*, 29–33.

all names for the NC.⁴¹ He lists these from among Kaiser's expressions for the NC as NC names (along with sample passages): the everlasting covenant, a new heart, a new spirit, the covenant of peace, and my covenant. In the process he surfaces one passage not mentioned in his article but present in Kaiser's list, Ezekiel 16:60–63, a passage accepted as a NC passage in this study's evaluation above of the Kaiser model. As mentioned above regarding both the Kaiser model and Pettegrew's approach, these names or labels are of mixed value for surfacing NC candidates in that some of them are used by writing prophets to refer to other unconditional covenants that are to be active in the Eschaton. Pettegrew then states that "the Old Testament books are saturated with information about the new covenant" and endnotes his statement with a revision of the key, definitional footnote in his article: "See further Bruce Ware, 'The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,' in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 69. See also Herbert W. Bateman IV, ed., *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999)."⁴²

Ironically, while the paragraph supported by this endnote evidences a closer adherence to Kaiser's categorization of NC passages than Pettegrew's prior article did, the book endnote has been revised to omit Kaiser as a mentioned source. Pettegrew retains the mention of Bruce Ware (who, as mentioned above, does quote Kaiser approvingly) as an explicit source and mentions in Kaiser's place the 1999 book *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism* edited by Herbert Bateman. The contributions that Pettegrew has in mind from the authors of Bateman's book (Darrell Bock, Lanier Burns, Elliott Johnson, and Stanley Toussaint) are not specified.

As in his article, Pettegrew then offers six elements of the NC that serve as additional criteria for surfacing NC passages. However, he has revised the six criteria since his article. The elements of the earlier list were presented as the key elements in Jeremiah 31, consisting of these: the NC is "new" and unlike

⁴¹ Ibid., 29.

⁴² Ibid., 29, 215.

the Mosaic covenant, it is “everlasting and irrevocable,” it offers an abundance of physical blessings (national gathering, rebuilding of cities, economic prosperity), and it offers the spiritual provisions of internal, individual transformation, of a fuller measure of divine forgiveness, and of a consummated relationship between God and the people of Israel.⁴³ The revised list presented in the book consists of these: individual transformation through a new heart (item four in the earlier list), final forgiveness (item five in the earlier list), a consummated relationship between God and Israel (item six in the earlier list), physical and material blessings for Israel (item three in the earlier list), permanent indwelling of the Spirit (a new item), and the Law inside the believer (a new item).

Key elements of Pettegrew’s model revision. Pettegrew has omitted from the earlier criteria for surfacing NC passages its first two items, the covenant being “new” in contradistinction to the Mosaic covenant and the covenant being eternal. The new list of criteria is no longer characterized as being derived from Jeremiah 31, and properly so, since the fifth criterion, permanent Spirit indwelling, is not mentioned in that Jeremiah passage. This is a crucial adjustment because it means that for Pettegrew those passages which do speak of the Spirit’s eschatological ministry to individual Israelites leading to internal transformation but do not reference a covenant by label, are now candidates as NC passages. Although Pettegrew does not mention it at this juncture, Joel 2:28–29 could be another such passage.

Of the two items omitted in his revision, Pettegrew’s removal of the first item, that the NC is new and unlike the Mosaic covenant, seems ill-advised. That element is both highlighted in Jeremiah 31 and, as a criterion, serves to properly distinguish NC passages in the prophets from passages referencing the eschatological activity of other unconditional

⁴³ Pettegrew, “New Covenant Ministry,” 255–59. Pettegrew does not offer a total count of these elements; the count of elements offered above reflects the fact that while Pettegrew deals with the elements of physical blessing as a group, he devotes a subtitle and multiple paragraphs to each of the spiritual provisions he discusses.

covenants. In contrast, Pettegrew's omission from the earlier list of the second item, that the NC is "everlasting and irrevocable," does seem to be an improvement. As discussed in the evaluation of the Kaiser model above, while that item as a criterion does surface possible NC passages, it must be supplemented because it does not succeed in differentiating NC passages from those passages referencing other unconditional covenants.

The most significant revision in the list appears to be the addition of the element *Spirit indwelling*. For Pettegrew's model this is significant strategically because it involves designating for the first time a primary element of the NC that is not mentioned by Jeremiah 31 (he references Ezek 36:27 as its biblical source). This means that Pettegrew has expanded Kaiser's list of "first passages" or a priori NC passages, from which initial criteria for selecting other passages are derived, from the locus classicus of Jeremiah 31 to include at least Ezekiel 36. This would seem to be a reasonable expansion of a priori NC passages, in that there is a great degree of overlap between the elements described in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36, so that the original basis for preferring the Jeremiah passage as the only "first passage," that it alone refers by label to the NC, seems unduly rigid. This expansion serves to bring new, significant candidates for NC passages into view from the point of the Kaiser and Pettegrew models. An example is the Joel 2 passage, which speaks of a massive, eschatological pouring out of the Spirit on humankind, but does so without mentioning the precise phrases *new heart* or *covenant* that the Kaiser and later Pettegrew models depend upon for surfacing potential NC passages.

Pettegrew reaps the benefit of revising his model to include *Spirit indwelling* as a primary element of the NC that is described outside of Jeremiah 31 (as per Ezek 36), as he begins his discussion in the second chapter of his book regarding the ministries of the Holy Spirit described in NC passages of the OT. He suggests that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit "initiates" the eschatological, NC period, and offers Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; Ezekiel 39:29; Joel 2:28–29 as NC passages that describe the event.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Ibid., 40.

And it seems that it does become difficult to disqualify these as NC passages, once the eschatological pouring out of the Spirit of YHWH is recognized as a signature provision of the NC.

Another revision Pettegrew offers, however, is of such a magnitude that it takes his model in a new, expansive, yet uncertain direction, far afield from Kaiser's approach. Per the "Compton model" to which he gives attribution, Pettegrew at this point begins adding not only additional NC passages, but additional selecting criteria derived from those new passages. Pettegrew states that Isaiah refers to the NC "at least five times" and lists Isaiah 42:6; 49:8; 54:10; 55:3; 59:21.⁴⁵ He attributes to Compton the four additional criteria for qualifying NC passages that Compton derives from Isaiah's NC passages: a covenant is promised to Israel after national calamity and prior to national blessing, the servant of YHWH is commissioned to function as the covenant's mediator, the servant is presented as a future David and national ruler, and the servant in conjunction with the covenant brings spiritual enlightenment and salvation to the Gentiles.⁴⁶ Pettegrew then endnotes Compton's contribution regarding the NC in Isaiah, and strongly affirms Compton's conclusions: "For an excellent biblical study of the new covenant, see Bruce Compton, 'An Examination of the New Covenant in the Old and New Testaments,' (unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, May 1986)."⁴⁷

With this new direction, the Pettegrew model has in a single move increased from six to ten the number of distinct primary elements of the NC in the OT, via additions derived from the Isaiah collection of passages that differ from the six criteria derived from the "first passages" of Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36. The first NC element derived from the Isaiah collection, involving Israel's eschatological restoration, overlaps as much

⁴⁵ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁶ As given by Compton, in "Dispensationalism," 18-19.

⁴⁷ Pettegrew, *New Covenant Ministry*, 216.

with passages describing the eschatological activity of other unconditional covenants. The remaining three criteria gained from the Isaiah collection add a trio of explicit Messianic, Davidic, and universal elements to the NC.⁴⁸ An outcome of this move is that Pettegrew has now brought into the NC those passages that describe the coming of a mediatorial servant and king. In his earlier model these were seen as passages describing events concurrent with and co-requisite for the activation of NC blessings. However, with his model for ascertaining NC passages now on Compton's path of continuous expansion, these Messianic passages are now NC passages.

Continuing the new, expansive direction of his model, Pettegrew follows Compton's model for collecting additional NC passages and additional NC elements from Ezekiel. He states that the following passages mention the NC "directly": Ezekiel 16:60; 34:23-25; 37:24-26.⁴⁹ From these passages Pettegrew expands his NC criteria with the following: the Davidic descendant will rule as prince over restored Israel, and the restored land is Palestine. As with the Compton model evaluated above, it seems the outcome of this ever-expanding list of NC criteria methodology must be a list of NC passages that encompasses most or all OT mentions of future divine covenantal activity, including passages which arguably have much more in common with the signature elements of, for example, the Davidic covenant than with the NC.

It seems that Pettegrew's model as described in his 1999 article offered a revision of the Kaiser model that brought to it some improvements. Pettegrew recognized the importance of discerning key elements of the NC from the locus classicus of Jeremiah 31, but also recognized the value of using these elements as criteria for surfacing other candidate NC passages based not on precise verbal adherence but on a more flexible "conceptual adherence" standard. The result was that Pettegrew's early model captured several significant, potential NC passages not present in Kaiser's list: Deuteronomy 30:6;

⁴⁸ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Isaiah 32:15; 44:3–5; Jeremiah 24:4–7; Ezekiel 39:29; and Joel 2:28–29.

Pettegrew's later model provided in his 2001 book offers the additional improvement of allowing Ezekiel 36 to supplement the "first passage" of Jeremiah 31 with a recognized, key element of the NC, the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit of YHWH on Israel. However, the benefits of the later model are eclipsed by Pettegrew's assimilation of the expansive approach of the Compton model, which promotes an ever-broadening list of NC elements methodologically and leads practically to a generic, all-inclusive eschatological covenant as the only possible outcome of its application to the data offered in the OT.

WHICH ARE THE NEW COVENANT PASSAGES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT? PART TWO

EXTENDED MODELS FOR ESTABLISHING OLD TESTAMENT, NEW COVENANT PASSAGES

Evangelicals studying the NC as presented in the OT have labored in the past with a deficiency in regards to the studies in print. Often these analyses draw varying conclusions from various plausible NC passages without defending, and certainly without gaining a consensus, regarding the proper list of passages to be studied to begin with. The allegory of the blind men examining different parts of the elephant and unavoidably drawing differing conclusions is unfortunately relevant to this situation.

Therefore, it is to the good fortune of current students of the NC that some have in recent decades given extended attention to the task of delineating the OT passages from which data regarding the NC can properly be drawn. Part one of this study evaluates five brief models for identifying NC passages in the OT. Part two reviews first a model published in 1968 by a French higher criticism proponent, and then a model offered in 1998 by an American evangelical who sought to collate the

elements of the former higher-critical model with the implied model of Kaiser.

The Model of Pierre Buis

French Old Testament scholar Pierre Buis offered in 1968 an article in *Vetus Testamentum* delineating his model for determining the NC passages in the OT.⁵⁰ Buis began by studying a small number of strategic NC passages in order to surface the definitive elements of the NC, which for him constitute an NC “form.” Once he had circumscribed the form and content of the NC by this approach, Buis argued that he was able to identify the NC passages in the OT based upon their degree of adherence to his NC form. The conclusion of Buis’ study is that the OT (with Apocrypha) has offered a formal covenant which was first introduced by Jeremiah and Deuteronomy contemporaneously, and then was reasserted by Ezekiel, Baruch, and Zechariah, involving ten passages in all.

Buis begins his presentation by labeling three passages, Jeremiah 32:37–41, Ezekiel 37:21–28, and Baruch 2:25–31, as the “better known” NC passages and observes that all three passages present the same five covenantal elements.⁵¹ For Buis,

⁵⁰ Pierre Buis, “La Nouvelle Alliance,” VT 18, no. 1 (Winter 1968): 1–15.

⁵¹ Ibid., 1–2. The apocryphal Baruch passage reads: “And, lo, they are cast out to the heat of the day, and to the frost of the night, and they died in great miseries by famine, by sword, and by pestilence. And the house which is called by thy name hast thou laid waste, as it is to be seen this day, for the wickedness of the house of Israel and the house of Juda. O Lord our God, thou hast dealt with us after all thy goodness, and according to all that great mercy of thine, As thou spakest by thy servant Moses in the day when thou didst command him to write the law before the children of Israel, saying, If ye will not hear my voice, surely this very great multitude shall be turned into a small number among the nations, where I will scatter them. For I knew that they would not hear me, because it is a stiffnecked people: but in the land of their captivities they shall remember themselves. And shall

the formulaic nature of the five elements is indicated by two characteristics, the grouping of these themes and the evidence of a “fixed vocabulary” across biblical authors.⁵² He notes that the ordering of the themes is highly variable. The NC elements which the former three passages reflect are (1) the gathering and return of the people, (2) the “definition” of the covenant (the formula “they will be my people; I will be their God”), (3) the people’s internal renovation, (4) the declaration of a “final” covenant, and (5) covenant blessings.⁵³ It would appear that these elements overlap with the following two “expressions” offered by Kaiser’s classic quote, being the *everlasting covenant*, and a *new heart* or a *new spirit*. Omitted by Buis relative to Kaiser are Kaiser’s two expressions *covenant of peace*, and a *covenant* or *my covenant* which is placed *in that day*.⁵⁴

In addition to the three, comprehensive NC passages, Buis offers four other passages that reflect all but the second element: Jeremiah 31:31–36; Ezekiel 34:25–31; 36:22–25; Zechariah 7:7–8:17. There are an additional three OT passages that reflect two of the five elements: Deuteronomy 30:1–10, Jeremiah 24:5–7, Ezekiel 16:53–65.⁵⁵ Buis designates these ten as *the NC passages* in the OT, reflecting to an adequate extent the five formal elements of the NC.

Buis’ list of ten NC passages compares to Kaiser’s seventeen as follows: both models capture Jeremiah 31:31–36; 32:37–41; Ezekiel 16:53–65; 34:25–31; 37:21–28. Passages unique to Buis are Deuteronomy 30:1–10; Jeremiah 24:5–7; Ezekiel 36:22–25;

know that I am the Lord their God: for I will give them an heart, and ears to hear” (Bar 2:25–31, The King James Version Apocrypha).

⁵² Ibid., 3.

⁵³ Ibid., 2, 7. As discussed below, Buis took the translation *final covenant* to be a preferred revision to the standard translation *everlasting covenant* in NC contexts.

⁵⁴ Walter C. Kaiser, “The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34,” JETS 15, no. 1 (Winter 1972): 14.

⁵⁵ Buis, “La Nouvelle Alliance,” 2.

Zechariah 7:7–8:17; Baruch 2:25–31. Passages unique to Kaiser are Isaiah 24:5; 42:6; 49:8; 55:3; 54:10; 59:21; 61:8; Jeremiah 50:5; Ezekiel 11:19; 18:31; 36:26; and Hosea 2:18–20.⁵⁶

Buis makes some valuable contributions toward understanding the NC in the OT, particularly in terms of exegetical observations. He points to a striking contrast between the way the “first” (Mosaic) covenant was renewed post-exile, and the way the NC will be initiated:

In the first it is the community that takes the initiative to repair the covenant broken by it or its ancestors; it is a question of reestablishing the old order. In the second, it is Yahweh who does everything: he reassembles the people, and transforms and concludes the covenant on the new foundations. We can't imagine two more different concepts⁵⁷

Buis also offers the insight that because some NC passages invite the reader to compare and contrast the NC to the Mosaic covenant, the lack of any mention by those same passages of a mediator for the NC would have been striking to the original readers. Specifically, the generous offer in the NC of divine grace cries out for an act of prevenient atonement.⁵⁸

As well, there is a refreshing independence to Buis's work in that he considers several passages that others do not discuss in

⁵⁶ Kaiser, “Old Promise,” 4.

⁵⁷ “Dans la première c’est la communauté qui prend l’initiative de réparer l’alliance rompue par elle ou ses ancêtres; il s’agit de rétablir l’ordre ancien. Dans la seconde, c’est Yahvé qui fait tout: il rassemble le peuple, le transforme et conclut l’alliance sur des bases nouvelles. On ne peut imaginer des conceptions plus différentes . . .” (Buis, “La Nouvelle Alliance,” 9–10).

⁵⁸ “This aspect [atonement] appears, diffused, in the Songs of the Servant where the mediator of the covenant (Isa 42:6; 49:8) was sacrificed for the sins of the people (Isaiah 53).” (“Cet aspect se retrouve; diffus; dans les Chants du Serviteur où le médiateur de l’alliance [Is. xlii 6; xlix 8] est sacrifié pour les péchés du peuple [Is. liii],” Ibid., 7n10).

relation to the NC, such as Baruch 2 and Zechariah 7–8. Buis also takes an independent approach to Jeremiah 31, the locus classicus for many students of the NC in the OT. For Buis the passage itself is of secondary import because, as seen in his listing of NC passages above, Jeremiah 31 does not reflect all the elements of the NC for Buis.⁵⁹ The label *new covenant* that for others makes this passage central is for Buis also of secondary import because it appears so rarely. As reflected in Buis's list of five NC elements, he prefers the label *everlasting covenant* (though he translates it *final covenant*) as the better label for the NC, based on his ten NC passages.⁶⁰

At first glance, Buis appears to offer a methodical, objective, inductive study for ascertaining the elements of the NC in the OT and the relevant Scripture passages. However, this aura of objectivity belies in fact unannounced, assumptive moves made at key junctures throughout the analysis, which bring into it elements of circularity and subjectivity. Buis begins with the three passages that for him circumscribe the elements of the NC, but the criterion for his selection of these foundational passages in the first place was that they were “better-known witnesses.”⁶¹ It is in fact the peers of Buis, and not the Scriptures, that surfaced the passages from which Buis derives the definitive elements of the NC in the OT. The nature of the origin of the five formal elements is critical for the rest of Buis's study because they, rather than a comparison to one or a group of Scripture passages, dictate if and when other passages are added to the list of NC passages.

Another element of subjectivity arises in Buis's process for arriving at five NC elements and ten NC passages. Buis arrives at ten NC passages, rather than more or less, because he works from the undefended assumption that the presence of two or more NC elements, not one or three, makes an OT passage a NC passage. It is clear that the number of NC passages could have

⁵⁹ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 1.

been much larger because as Buis reviews each of the five NC elements, he mentions passages outside of his ten that reflect the element. The determination that five is the correct number of elements is also subjective. Given that the second of Buis's five NC elements ("you will be my people; I will be your God") is present in only three of his ten passages, would it not be reasonable to omit that element and decrease "the NC elements" to four? Or, perhaps, should Buis have retained the original number of five elements, but omitted the second in favor of a new, more pervasive candidate found in a different set of passages? In fact, Buis mentions later in his presentation that there is actually an additional (sixth) element, the historical introduction,⁶² that is either present in, or adjacent to, five of his ten passages and is alluded to by other passages.⁶³ Buis does not discuss his justification for rejecting this element in favor of the less-prevalent second element in his list.

Or, perhaps one might prefer to claim that the NC passages each reflect all of the NC elements. Buis could have increased to one hundred percent the proportion of his NC passages that list all the NC elements, simply by delineating four (rather than five) NC elements, *all* of which are present in seven (rather than ten) NC passages in the OT.

In addition, some of Buis's exegetical conclusions are questionable. He argues that the phrase *eternal covenant* is the favored label for the NC, but after acknowledging that it is used as well to label other covenants, argues that only in the case of the NC this label carries the meaning *final covenant* rather than *eternal covenant*.⁶⁴ He offers no exegetical justifications for this distinction in this article.

⁶² Ibid., 9.

⁶³ Of course the reality that some passages Buis considered have possible elements adjacent to them raises the problem of controversial, if not arbitrary, boundaries to the passages being examined.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 7.

Buis offers an interesting evaluation of possible NC passages in Isaiah. His list of ten NC passages is notable for excluding any passages from Isaiah, but for Buis this is the only possible outcome. Working from higher critical assumptions, he notes that Deutero-Isaiah is writing later than Jeremiah, Deuteronomy, and Ezekiel.⁶⁵ For Buis, the relative lateness of the Isaiah passages means that they should be viewed as commentary on the fully formulated NC, in the form of “conscious allusions.”⁶⁶ At the same time, Buis admits that Deutero-Isaiah does add an element to the NC content that is absolutely necessary, which is the involvement of an atoning mediator as described in Isaiah 42:1–7; 49:1–13.⁶⁷ Thus an unconscious circularity again seems to have arisen in the model. While the Isaiah passages offer a necessary piece to the “NC puzzle” according to Buis, they cannot help to define the formulaic elements of the NC—Buis has already excluded Isaiah from that category of passages based on higher critical chronologies.

Among evangelicals and increasingly so outside of evangelicalism, the commitment of Buis to the Documentary Hypothesis will be viewed as another flaw for his model. Buis assumes that the NC passages of Deuteronomy 30 and Jeremiah 31 are both slightly pre-exilic, and therefore are contemporaneous and mutually-independent descriptions of the NC. It is because of the Documentary Hypothesis that the candidate NC passages of Deutero-Isaiah were rejected, being commentary for the earlier NC passages of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Perhaps of greatest concern to dispensational premillennialists, Buis minimized the theological significance of the NC being an unconditional covenant that describes unilateral acts on the part of YHWH. On Documentary Hypothesis grounds, Buis declares the apparent contrast between conditional vassal

⁶⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 7.

treaties and unilateral acts on the part of YHWH to be due only to differences in perspective between sources *E* and *P*.⁶⁸

The greatest benefit of Buis's model is neither the model itself, nor the criteria it has put forth for surfacing NC passages in the OT, given the number of subjective elements involved. The greatest benefits of the model are its proposed significant OT passages and proposed NC elements that have been overlooked by other students of the NC in the OT.

The Model of Paul R. Thorsell

Evangelical theologian Paul Thorsell wrote the article "The Spirit in the Present Age: Preliminary Fulfillment of the Predicted New Covenant According to Paul" in 1998 for the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. He purposed to show, in accordance with a progressive dispensational stance, "that within the Pauline corpus the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit among believers demonstrates that the new covenant is currently operative, albeit in a partial and preliminary way."⁶⁹ Appropriately, the focus of Thorsell's article is on expositing the Apostle Paul's discussion of the NC particularly in terms of his understanding of its impact upon and relationship to Gentiles interadvent. In addition, however, Thorsell devotes the first four pages of his article to laying out a model for determining the elements of, and secondarily the Scripture passages reflecting, the NC in the OT.

Thorsell begins with a brief, informal description of three primary criteria for identifying NC elements and NC passages in the OT. He first identifies Jeremiah 31 (due to its unique label *new covenant*), then writes of OT references to an eschatological covenant, that is, passages using the term *covenant* within a future context, and thirdly speaks of other OT passages that are

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁹ Paul R. Thorsell, "The Spirit in the Present Age: Preliminary Fulfillment of the Predicted New Covenant According to Paul," *JETS* 41, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 397.

likewise NC references due to “comparable content.”⁷⁰ In beginning analysis with the Jeremiah 31 passage, Thorsell’s approach stands within the mainstream of analyses of the NC in the OT since Kaiser. In contrast, Thorsell’s second criterion, which purports to capture any OT reference to any covenant described as active in a future context, makes his model vulnerable to capturing all manner of unconditional covenants that may be active in the Eschaton, in line with Compton’s “general eschatological covenant” model. Thorsell does not take his model to that point in this article, however.

Thorsell next summarizes approvingly Buis’s model, and uses that model to ascertain additional NC elements and passages in the OT beyond Jeremiah 31.⁷¹ The five formal NC elements and the ten NC passages of Buis form the base of Thorsell’s model. Thorsell’s acceptance of Buis’s model does involve massaging and overlooking undesirable elements of the Buis model, generally without comment. He retains Buis’s number of ten passages while at the same time deleting one, the apocryphal reference from Baruch 2, and replacing it without comment with one not in Buis’s list, Hosea 2:14–23. Thorsell speaks of Buis’s NC “form” as having six elements, while in reality Buis defends five. Thorsell expands Buis’s NC form by inserting the *historical introduction* element which Buis acknowledges but omits from his form. Thorsell does not do likewise with another “necessary” covenantal element that Buis also discusses at length and also omits from his NC form, that being the NC’s mediator, which Buis sees described in the first two Servant Songs of Isaiah.⁷² Thorsell also appears to have deviated from Buis’s somewhat arbitrary rule that an OT passage needs to reflect at least two of the form elements to be listed as a NC passage—while Thorsell begins with the same ten NC passages of Buis, he eventually adds passages (per Kaiser)

⁷⁰ Ibid., 398.

⁷¹ Ibid., 398–400.

⁷² Buis, “La Nouvelle Alliance,” 7.

that reflect no more than one element of the NC form.⁷³ Thorsell rejects without comment Buis's diminution of both the Jeremiah 31 passage and its *new covenant* reference in using Jeremiah 31 as his initial, primary NC passage and highlighting its unique label. Thorsell sidesteps without comment Buis's contention that the label *everlasting covenant* should, only in the case of NC passages, be translated *final covenant*. It seems that Thorsell's adjustments to Buis's model are a net improvement, though they perhaps should have been acknowledged.

Thorsell's first expansion of Buis's model comes by way of making the presence of any of a collection of covenantal labels a valid selection criterion for capturing NC passages.⁷⁴ In an early footnote Thorsell quotes approvingly the portion of Kaiser's classic list of NC expressions and passages that captures labels which are synonymous (for Kaiser and Thorsell) to the label *new covenant* in Jeremiah 31:

In addition to Jeremiah's mention of a new covenant the expression 'everlasting covenant' is sometimes a reference to an eschatological covenant (Isa 55:3; 61:8; Jer 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60; 37:26), as are the expressions 'covenant of peace' (Isa 54:10; Ezek 34:25; 37:26) and simply the term 'covenant' (Isa 42:6; 49:8; 59:21; Ezek 20:37; Hos 2:18) in an eschatological context (see W. C. Kaiser, "The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34'").⁷⁵

Thus Thorsell captures several passages as NC passages that Buis does not, in particular passages from Isaiah which for Buis are too late chronologically to have had a place in developing

⁷³ Thorsell, "Spirit in the Present Age," 398.

⁷⁴ For Buis, the label *final covenant* was an element of the NC form that was occasionally present, and he did not recognize other labels except for *new covenant* in Jeremiah 31, which for him was of secondary import ("La Nouvelle Alliance," 7).

⁷⁵ Thorsell, "Spirit in the Present Age," 398.

the NC form.⁷⁶ The critique offered in part one regarding the portion of Kaiser's model that Thorsell incorporates here will apply. Briefly, the list of covenantal names Kaiser assembles is too inclusive, and therefore too broad a discriminating tool for capturing only NC passages. For example, the covenantal labels in the Isaiah 24 and Isaiah 54 passages probably refer to the Noahic covenant, and the labels in the Isaiah 55 and Isaiah 61 passages probably refer to the Davidic covenant.

Thorsell's incorporation of most of Buis's model and some of Kaiser's model results in a curious treatment of Isaiah 42 and Isaiah 47 since Buis rejects them as NC passages and Kaiser accepts them. Because Thorsell rejects the Documentary Hypothesis, he would not have rejected candidate Isaiah passages on that basis as did Buis. On the other hand, Thorsell does not speak to Buis's belated conclusion that these Isaiah passages capture a necessary element for the NC, that being the covenant's mediator. So these Isaiah passages do not enter the "stable" of NC passages for Thorsell because, per Buis, they refer to a mediator. Rather, they enter Thorsell's collection of passages because, per Kaiser, they mention a covenant that is active in a future context.⁷⁷

Thorsell expands upon Buis's model a second time by examining, more closely than any other of the models reviewed, the NC element involving internal, individual, spiritual transformation of NC recipients as reflected in the OT. This focus represents a strength in Thorsell's model because that element is effective for distinguishing passages describing the NC's future activation from passages describing the future activity of other unconditional biblical covenants. Thorsell argues correctly that "this element may be the most distinctive aspect of the predicted eschatological covenant and is present in other contexts than the ten in the [Buis] chart [of ten passages]."⁷⁸ Thorsell offers an excellent sub-categorization of

⁷⁶ Buis, "La Nouvelle Alliance," 15.

⁷⁷ Kaiser, "Old Promise," 14.

⁷⁸ Thorsell, "Spirit in the Present Age," 399.

the NC element of internal, individual, spiritual transformation, along with some of the relevant OT passages:

The moral renewal is described in widely differing fashions as (1) a circumcision of the heart (Deut 30:6; cf. Jer 4:4), (2) the giving of a new heart or changing of the heart (Jer 24:7; 32:39; Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 36:26), (3) the putting of a new spirit/God's Spirit within them (Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 36:26-27; 37:14), or (4) the placing/writing of Yahweh's law in/on the hearts of the people (Jer 31:33).⁷⁹

With this expansion Thorsell captures all of the remaining passages in the Kaiser model. At the same time, Thorsell does not take the opportunity to suggest passages that would fit these subcategories outside of the ones discussed by Buis and Kaiser. In particular, the omission of Joel 2:28-29 from the third subcategory in the above quotation seems striking. Perhaps it is because Thorsell chooses to limit himself to passages raised by Buis and Kaiser as a time-saving move, or perhaps it is because the putting of God's Spirit within individuals may not seem explicit in Joel's description of the Spirit being poured out upon all humankind. It seems that Thorsell passes up an opportunity to consider candidate NC passages that his helpful subcategories could have brought to mind.

Thorsell develops a model for identifying NC passages in the OT that offers strengths along with some weaknesses. He borrows discriminately from Buis's model, successfully filtering out higher-critical assumptions, an apocryphal passage, and most of the arbitrary assumptions made by Buis, while keeping Buis's concept of a collection of stable NC elements. Thorsell borrowed less discriminately from Kaiser's model, so that he retains the problematic tendency of Kaiser's model to capture covenantal passages likely referring to eschatologically active covenants other than the NC.

⁷⁹ Ibid. Every one of these passages is present in either Buis ("La Nouvelle Alliance," 1-15), Kaiser ("Old Promise," 14), or both.

The strength of Thorsell's model is its focus upon two elements which both are unique to the NC in the OT and successfully distinguish it from eschatological emanations of other biblical covenants, these being the label *new covenant* and the emphasis on individual, internal, spiritual transformation of the covenant's beneficiaries. Thorsell's overlooking of passages that fit the latter category simply because they were not raised earlier by Buis or Kaiser is a flaw; the Joel 2:28–29 passage seems to be the most important victim of this oversight.

SUMMARY EVALUATION OF THE MODELS

The models recently put in print for ascertaining the NC passages in the OT vary considerably along virtually any continuum one might apply. Some are simple while others are complex; some are brief while others are quite detailed. Some like Master's model are quite restrictive in their parameters, admitting few OT passages into their lists, while others like Compton's are quite expansive and potentially capture scores of passages. The complexity of a model does not appear to be a strong advantage.

There are as well commonalities to the models surveyed, some beneficial and others not. As a positive, all the models from evangelicals register in agreement with the NT authors the centrality of the Jeremiah 31:31–34 passage for accurately delineating the NC, even while the models offer no consensus as to the reasons for this or as to the existence of other pivotal OT passages. As a negative, all incorporate some amount of unacknowledged arbitrariness or extra-biblical premises into their construction, whether in their choice of a starting point for constructing the model or in their final selection of criteria for evaluating candidate NC passages.

Every model examined benefits the NC student by offering criteria for identifying NC passages and elements in the OT. At the same time they create frustrations for the student of the NC. First, they offer no consensus as to the proper selection criteria for NC passages and elements in the OT, as well as no consensus on the outcomes. Second, whether due to flawed premises or

flawed strategies, every model seems to lead to lists of NC elements and NC passages that are either too exclusive, too inclusive, or both. The Joel 2 passage provides an interesting test case for any model seeking to ascertain the NC in the OT. The passage has been evaluated by some models as a primary NC passage due to the described eschatological, transformative work of the Spirit. The passage has been rejected altogether by others due either to the absence of a covenant reference, to its early date, or to the absence of other covenantal details deemed necessary.

DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW MODEL FOR SURFACING NEW COVENANT PASSAGES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The lack of consensus among evangelicals regarding the proper approach for identifying the key passages and key elements within the OT regarding the NC is perhaps the best argument for a new model that will begin the process towards that consensus. As seen in the models reviewed in parts one and two, within even a narrow subset of evangelicals there is little consensus—the two most disparate models in that survey, John Master’s model and the “generic eschatological” model of Bruce Compton, come from American traditional dispensationalists.

A Description and Defense of the Proposed Model

The first step in building the model for ascertaining the NC passages in the OT is to select a strategy for evaluating proposed NC passages and elements that is least affected by initial premises and preunderstandings regarding the NC. Therefore, the core strategy of the model should be that of considering and gradually integrating possible NC passages, while continuously reviewing and revising the evolving, increasingly concordant list of apparent NC passages and elements that results. This approach has been variously described as the “hermeneutical spiral” by Grant Osborne, the “verificational method” by Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, “retroduction” by John Montgomery, “adduction” by Arthur F. Holmes, and “abduction” by Paul

Feinberg.⁸⁰ While presenting his brief model for identifying NC passages and elements in the OT, Kaiser offers the following bases for making Jeremiah 31 the definitional passage to which other candidate passages are compared:

Firstly, the unique appearance of the word 'new' in this passage stimulated Origen to be the first to name the last 27 books of the Bible 'The New Testament.' Secondly, it was the largest piece of text to be quoted *in extenso* in the New Testament—Heb 8:8–12. The writer of Hebrews even partially repeats the same long quotation a few chapters later in 10:16–17. Thirdly, it was the subject of nine other New Testament texts: four dealing with the Lord's Supper, three additional references in Hebrews and two passages in Paul dealing with 'ministers of the new covenant' and the future forgiveness of Israel's sins.⁸¹

It seems that a model for identifying NC passages that exercises the method of adduction and omits Kaiser's appeal to extra-biblical testimony will yet arrive at the same conclusion: that the Jeremiah 31:31–34 passage is unquestionably an NC passage. To exaggerate only slightly, were one to begin the verificational process with an OT passage chosen at random, as inefficient a strategy as that would be, the process of gradually collecting possible OT passages referencing a NC and continuously culling this pool of preliminary passages of its least-concordant members will eventually produce a list of passages that includes Jeremiah 31.

It is at the second step of formulating a model for identifying NC passages in the OT that the models described prior and the proposed model begin to part ways. The second step of model construction has generally involved assigning to Jeremiah 31

⁸⁰ Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 6; Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 11. Cf. Timothy Warren, "The Theological Process in Sermon Preparation," *BSac* 156, no. 623 [Summer 1999]: 343.

⁸¹ Kaiser, "Old Promise," 14.

the role of dictating the NC elements to be found in the OT—its content becomes the sole basis by which other passages are evaluated as potential companion NC passages. This, however, is a flawed step that falls short of the more objective verification process—the process of allowing any and all Bible texts to make their contribution to integration and synthesis has in this case been interrupted.

The move to make Jeremiah 31 the definitional passage prematurely carries with it two dangers. The first danger is one of undue inclusions. This passage, if anointed as definitional, could provide parameters for surfacing other NC passages that additional integration from other passages would have exposed as being of secondary import. For example, it would be possible to infer from Jeremiah 31 that the future physical expansion of Jerusalem proper and its walls is a key element of the NC. The integration of additional passages, however, leads to the conclusion that the topographical expansion of Jerusalem itself is properly viewed as a detail within a broader NC element, that being the civic and economic restoration of physical Israel. Without the kind of rigorous, integrative analysis demanded by the verificational process, the “topographical expansion of Jerusalem” element in the Jeremiah passage could be made to carry undue force by leading the model to inappropriately capture prospective NC passages that mention only this detail.

The second danger to making the second step of model construction the premature anointing of Jeremiah 31 as the sole passage for dictating all the major emphases of the NT in the OT proves to be a mirror image of the first, the danger of undue exclusions. That is, it is possible that such a model could exclude a primary NC element because the element is missing from Jeremiah 31 while an adductive study of the OT would show the element to be heavily represented in other primary NC passages. This seems to be precisely the situation in regards to the role of the Spirit of YHWH in the activation of the NC, an emphasis in a number of OT passages such as Ezekiel 36, but at most alluded to in Jeremiah 31. This danger of not allowing for key elements to the NC that are not explicit in Jeremiah 31 appears to have been an issue in the John Master model, which has the Jeremiah passage as its primary text. As indicated in part

one, Master had to bend the parameters of his model to allow the Ezekiel 36 passage the status necessary to bring that passage's contribution regarding the explicit ministry of the Spirit into his model.

When, as in the proposed model, the second step of model construction involves allowing the verificational process to continue uninterrupted beyond the surfacing of Jeremiah 31, adduction will surface a cluster of passages that significantly overlap and reinforce one another, by way of common context and content. The following list enumerates the cluster of primary passages and cluster of primary emphases produced by the proposed model after the initial two steps have been taken.⁸²

The first element reinforced by the key passages is the reference to the enactment of a future, divine covenant with national Israel that is not verbally linked to Abraham or David (Isa 59:15b-21; Jer 31:27-40, 32:36-44; Ezek 16:53-63, 37:21-28). The second NC element is the Spirit of YHWH as agent (Isa 32:9-20, 59:15b-21; Ezek 36:22-38, 39:25-29; Joel 2:28-3:8; Zech 12:6-14). The third is the internal, spiritual transformation of the recipients (Deut 30:1-6; Isa 32:9-20, 59:15b-21; Jer 31:27-40, 32:36-44; Ezek 16:53-63, 36:22-38, 37:21-28, 39:25-29; Joel 2:28-3:8; Zech 12:6-14). The fourth is the uninterrupted permanence of the benefits (with an absence of conditions) (Isa 59:15b-21; Jer 31:27-40, 32:36-44; Ezek 16:53-63, 36:22-38, 37:21-28, 39:25-29).⁸³ The fifth is the physical regathering of Israel (Deut 30:1-6; Jer 32:36-44; Ezek 16:53-63, 36:22-38, 37:21-28, 39:25-29; Joel 2:28-3:8; Zech 12:6-14). The sixth and final element of the NC reinforced by the cluster of primary passages is the physical (civic, agricultural, economic, military) restoration of national Israel (Deut 30:1-6; Isaiah 32:9-20; Jer 31:27-40, 32:36-44; Ezek 36:22-38, 37:21-28, 39:25-29; Joel 2:28-3:8; Zech 12:6-14).

⁸² See in table format at the end of this chapter.

⁸³ Again, the mention of an *everlasting covenant* is not significant by itself, since Isaiah apparently uses the same label for the Noahic covenant in Isaiah 24:5.

Thus, the proposed model suggests that there are six primary elements and eleven primary passages regarding the NC in the OT. The degree of clustering surfaced by the model is notable. There are no fewer than five primary passages per primary element and no fewer than four primary elements per primary passage. It is also notable that the model does not support the existence of one “primary” NC text in the OT. The model surfaces no single passage that references all of the primary elements of the NC in the OT.

The third and final step of the proposed model involves continuing the verificational process in order to surface secondary NC passages and secondary NC elements in the OT. The adduction method requires the practitioner to recognize that at any point in this third step it could be properly concluded that NC passages and elements previously labeled as “primary” should be reappraised as secondary, and vice versa. Thus the two categories are, in this sense, never deemed to be final.

From this third step arise NC elements that are mentioned irregularly in the OT relative to the six-part enumeration above. Their status as NC elements is defensible in that they are all mentioned at least once by the eleven primary passages. Four secondary NC elements in the OT are the label *new covenant* (Jer 31:27–40), the replacing of the Mosaic covenant (Jer 31:27–40), the involvement of a Messianic redeemer (Isa 42:1–7, 49:1–13, 59:15b–21 [though possibly YHWH]; Ezek 37:21–28), and the final forgiveness of sin (Ezek 16:53–63, 36:22–38, 37:21–28). This list of secondary elements surfaces the fact that a Messianic-Davidic element has been often overlooked by students of the NC. The OT gives more attention to that element than to the label *new covenant*, for example. The more secondary NC passages, designated in the proposed model as those which mention two or three of the primary elements of the NC, are eight in number. In relationship to the proposed six primary elements of the NC, Isaiah 42:1–7 seems to refer to the spiritual restoration of Israel, the physical regathering of Israel, the physical restoration of Israel, and the involvement of a messianic leader and redeemer. Isaiah 44:1–5 seems to refer to the physical restoration of Israel, the spiritual restoration of

Israel, and the Spirit of YHWH as agent. Isaiah 49:1–13 seems to refer to the spiritual restoration of Israel, the physical regathering of Israel, the physical restoration of Israel, and a Messianic leader and redeemer. Jeremiah 24:4–7 seems to refer to the physical regathering of Israel, the physical restoration of Israel, and the spiritual restoration of Israel. Jeremiah 50:5 seems to refer to the physical regathering of Israel in the context of an “everlasting covenant.” Ezekiel 11:14–21 seems to refer to the physical regathering of Israel, the physical restoration of Israel, and the spiritual restoration of Israel. Ezekiel 34:11–31 seems to refer to the permanence of covenanted benefits, the physical regathering of Israel, and the physical restoration of Israel. Zechariah 8:1–17 seems to refer to the physical regathering of Israel, the physical restoration of Israel, and the spiritual restoration of Israel.

Some of the distinctions made above (such as to qualify as a *secondary* NC passage a proposed passage must list two or three NC elements, not one or four) are as subjective as some distinctions made within the prior models. However, there is a crucial difference: the prior models all exercise subjectivity in regards to beginning points and methodology, so that they are inherently subjective models. In contrast, the proposed model exhibits subjectivity only at the point of categorizing results in subjectively arriving at a demarcation between surfaced NC passages as *primary* versus *secondary*. In fact, the term *cluster* is being used deliberately for its subjective overtones in describing the primary NC passages and elements in the proposed model. The reference to a cluster of NC passages and elements is intended to bring to mind the picture of a circumference line drawn intuitively and subjectively around “data points” (in this case, proposed NC passages and elements) that are clustered together to set them off from peripheral, outlying data points. However, as long as the adductive method is faithfully adhered to so that all such demarcations are viewed as preliminary, the verification process will continue to provide necessary adjustments in the demarcation line between primary and secondary NC passages and elements. A conclusion that the OT offers one, five, or (in this model) eleven primary NC passages is both truly subjective and truly non-problematic as

long as the verificational cycle of re-verifying particulars (in this case, valid NC passages and NC elements) and adjusting conclusions (in this case, reducing or expanding the collection of NC passages and elements) is allowed to continue.

A Strategic Element of the Proposed Model

A key weakness to the prior models appears to be their failure to distinguish between elements of the NC that successfully *describe* it versus elements of the NC that both successfully describe it and successfully *differentiate* it from other covenants. In terms of logical fallacies, this failure is a kind of “hasty generalization.” The fallacy is illustrated by the following: for the adult male human body, the presence of two arms is a valid descriptive element, but that feature is a poor discriminating element—it serves very poorly for discriminating male human bodies from those of women and children. Apart from Master’s model, the prior models make the strategic error of generalizing the genuine, discriminating ability of some descriptive elements of the NC to all descriptive elements of the NC.⁸⁴

Because many models for delineating NC elements in the OT apparently overlook the distinction between descriptive elements and discriminating elements, they tend to capture inappropriately some OT passages that in reality describe the activity of other divine covenants in the Eschaton, failing to discriminate between covenants that are related but distinct.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ The Master model reviewed in part 1 of this article is an exception to this weakness, in that its two or three descriptive elements also successfully discriminate the NC from other covenants. Master’s model does not involve any elements that are descriptive only, and he does not distinguish in his chapter the roles of describing versus discriminating elements in the NC. See John R. Master, “The New Covenant,” in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, ed. John R. Master and Wesley R. Willis (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 93-110.

⁸⁵ See specific comments in this regard within the evaluations above of the models of Kaiser, Compton, Pettegrew, Buis, and Thorsell.

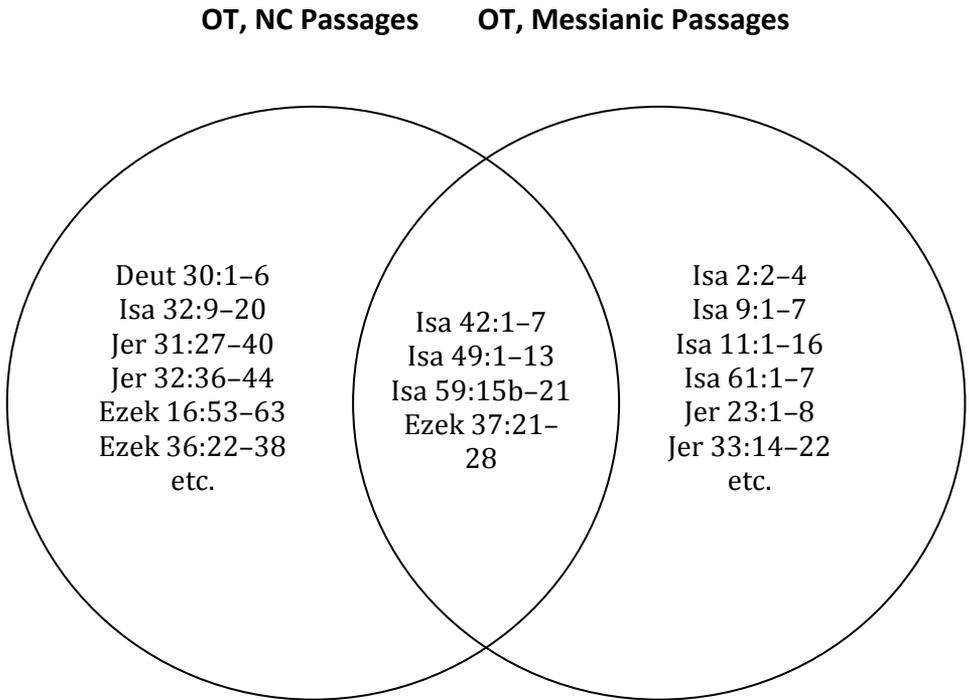
To be more specific, these models err in assuming that the following (non-discriminatory) elements will capture NC passages only: the presence of the label *covenant* or *everlasting covenant* or *covenant of peace*, the description of the physical regathering of national Israel, the description of the physical restoration of national Israel, the description of a redeeming Messiah, and the uninterrupted permanence of the benefits (with an absence of conditions). In contrast, the proposed model offers five of eleven NC elements that both describe the NC and discriminate it from other covenants: the Spirit of YHWH as agent, the internal and spiritual transformation of the recipients, the label *new covenant*, the replacing of the Mosaic covenant, and the final forgiveness of sin. The veracity of these elements as discriminatory can be seen in the fact that when employed by any of the prior models, these elements did not capture any covenants other than the NC, even though the models overlook the issue of description versus discrimination.

A SIGNIFICANT OUTCOME FROM THE PROPOSED MODEL

As indicated above, the proposed model finds the involvement of a Messianic redeemer to be one of six secondary elements of the NC that is irregularly mentioned in NC passages in the OT. Reference to a Messianic redeemer appears in two primary NC passages per the model (Isa 59:15b–21; Ezek 37:21–28), and two secondary NC passages, the first two Servant Songs (Isa 42:1–7; 49:1–13). In the same way that the proposed model identifies a cluster of primary NC passages and a cluster of primary NC elements in the OT, the model could identify a cluster of primary messianic passages and a cluster of primary messianic elements in the OT. As one can show with a Venn diagram (see below), the cluster of primary NC passages and the cluster of primary Messianic passages in the OT overlap because at least four of the NC passages as listed above reference both the NC and a messianic redeemer. In addition, the proposed model could be used to reveal whether the NC is a secondary or primary element of the messianic passages in the

OT since, as indicated in the figure below, four of the NC passages are also messianic passages.

Figure: Overlap of New Covenant and Messianic Passages in the Old Testament



SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED MODEL

The proposed model begins from the presumption that the verificational process of the hermeneutical spiral provides the best starting point for examining OT data because it minimizes the problem of a starting datum point, a definitional NC passage. This it accomplishes by making conclusions from data preliminary and by using them as a tool for verifying and reassessing the appropriateness of the data points that have been accepted and that have been rejected. The model purports

that its conclusions regarding the NC passages and elements are subjective but not problematic as long as the cycle of re-verifying particulars and adjusting conclusions (in this case, reducing or expanding the preliminary collection of NC passages and elements) is allowed to continue.

The model purports that this process of adduction surfaces a cluster of passages that significantly overlap and reinforce one another. Specifically, there are six primary elements and eleven primary passages regarding the NC in the OT. The degree of clustering of the data is notable: there are no fewer than five primary passages per primary element, and no fewer than four primary elements per primary passage. It is also notable that the model does not support the existence of a “primary” NC text—it surfaces no one passage that references all of the key elements of the NC in the OT.

The model also identifies four secondary NC elements and eight secondary NC passages. The former have in common that while they are irregularly mentioned in the OT relative to the primary NC elements, they are all mentioned at least once by the eleven primary passages. The latter have in common that they mention more than one and less than four of the primary NC elements. The model acknowledges that the demarcations between primary and secondary NC elements and passages are arbitrary tools for describing the real, graduated clustering of NC elements and passages in terms of content overlap.

Second to the importance of using the adductive method for the model is making the distinction between NC elements that are only descriptive and elements that both describe the NC and discriminate between the NC and other covenantal activity described in eschatological OT passages. The failure to recognize that some elements of the NC may not be unique to the NC, and may in fact lead the NC student to passages describing not the NC but eschatological, covenantal activity more generally, has been endemic in earlier models. This model offers the following NC elements as “discriminating,” that is, unique to the NC relative to other OT covenants active in the Eschaton: the Spirit of YHWH as agent, the internal and spiritual transformation of the recipients, the label *new covenant*, the

replacing of the Mosaic covenant, and the final forgiveness of sin.

For the sake of comparison, the table below lists the NC elements and passages in the OT as reflected by four of the models discussed. They were selected based on space limitations and on the uniqueness of their approach.

Table: New Covenant Elements According to Kaiser, Buis, Master, Fredrickson

Walter Kaiser	Pierre Buis	John Master	David Fredrickson
<i>A covenant or my covenant which is placed in that day</i> (Isa 42:6; 49:8, 59:21; Hos 2:18–20)			The enactment of a future divine covenant with national Israel that is not verbally linked to Abraham or David (Isa 59:15b–21; Jer 31:27–40, 32:36–44; Ezek 16:53–63, 37:21–28)
		The Spirit of YHWH as agent (Ezek 36:22–38)	*The Spirit of YHWH as agent (Isa 32:9–20, 59:15b–21; Ezek 36:22–38, 39:25–29; Joel 2:28–3:8; Zech 12:6–14)
<i>A new heart or new spirit</i> (Jer 32:39 [LXX]; Ezek 11:19, 18:31; 36:26)	The people's internal renovation (Jer 31:31–36, 32:37–41; Ezek 34:25–31, 36:22–25, 37:21–28; Zech 7:7–8:17; Bar 2:25–31)	A unilateral divine change in recipients causing complete obedience (Jer 31:31–33)	*The internal, spiritual transformation of the recipients (Deut 30:1–6; Isa 32:9–20, 59:15b–21; Jer 31:27–40, 32:36–44; Ezek 16:53–63, 36:22–38, 37:21–28, 39:25–29; Joel 2:28–3:8; Zech 12:6–14)

Walter Kaiser	Pierre Buis	John Master	David Fredrickson
The <i>everlasting covenant</i> (Isa 24:5; 55:3, 61:8; Jer 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60; 37:26)	The declaration of a <i>final covenant</i> (Deut 30:1–10; Jer 24:5–7, 31:31–36; 32:37–41; Ezek 34:25–31, 36:22–25, 37:21–28; Zech 7:7–8:17; Bar 2:25–31) The “definition” of the covenant (Deut 30:1–10; Jer 32:37–41; Ezek 16:53–65, 37:21–28; Bar 2:25–31)		The uninterrupted permanence of benefits (with an absence of conditions) (Isa 59:15b–21; Jer 31:27–40, 32:36–44; Ezek 16:53–63, 36:22–38, 37:21–28, 39:25–29)
	The gathering and return of the people (Jer 31:31–36, 32:37–41; Ezek 34:25–31, 36:22–25, 37:21–28; Zech 7:7–8:17; Bar 2:25–31)		The physical regathering of Israel (Deut 30:1–6; Jer 32:36–44; Ezek 16:53–63, 36:22–38, 37:21–28, 39:25–29; Joel 2:28–3:8; Zech 12:6–14)
The <i>covenant of peace</i> (Isa 54:10; Ezek 34:25, 37:26)	Covenant blessings (Jer 24:5–7; 31:31–36; 32:37–41; Ezek 16:53–65, 34:25–31,		The physical (civic, agricultural, economic, military) restoration of national Israel (Deut 30:1–6; Isa 32:9–20; Jer 31:27–40, 32:36–44,

Walter Kaiser	Pierre Buis	John Master	David Fredrickson
	36:22-25, 37:21-28; Zech 7:7-8:17; Bar 2:25-31)		Ezek 36:22-38, 37:21-28, 39:25-29; Joel 2:28-3:8; Zech 12:6-14)
The <i>new covenant</i> (Jer 31:31)		The name <i>new covenant</i> (Jer 31:31)	Secondary: *the label <i>new covenant</i> (Jer 31:27-40)
		The replacing of the Mosaic covenant (Jer 31:31-34)	Secondary: *the replacing of the Mosaic covenant (Jer 31:27-40)
			Secondary: the involvement of a Messianic redeemer (Isa 42:1-7, 49:1-13, 59:15b-21; Ezek 37:21-28)
<i>*Elements which effectively distinguish the NC from other eschatological covenants</i>			Secondary: *the final forgiveness of sin (Ezek 16:53-63, 36:22-38, 37:21-28)

Islamic Eschatology: Implications for Christian Witness

Warren Larson, Ph.D.
Director of Zwemer Center for Muslim Studies
Columbia International University
Columbia, South Carolina

INTRODUCTION

Since Muslims have spent considerable time and energy thinking about future things, it behooves us to look carefully at what they do believe. This article will first of all examine the prominence of last things in Islam, a doctrine Kenneth Cragg says, Muslims view as *only* judicial.¹ This he feels reflects on the very nature of God as simply an omnipotent judge with little thought of his divine love.² Second, select signs of “The End” will be laid out, followed by a discussion of the horrors of hell and pleasures of paradise. Finally, we will look at the role of Jesus as judge in Islamic eschatology. The study will be buttressed throughout with references from the Qur’an and Hadith. In the various Islamic-Christian eschatological comparisons³ it will soon become apparent that the gospel addresses many felt-needs—particularly in light of the Muslim uncertainty about death and the hereafter. Due to space limitations, the paper will have little to say about current events in the Middle East, but it will briefly demonstrate that both Christianity and Islam look to the coming Messiah for ultimate peace on earth.

¹ Kenneth Cragg, *Readings in the Qur’an: Selected and Translated by Kenneth Cragg* (London: HarperCollins, 1988), 75-80.

² *Ibid.*

³ Richard Bell, *Introduction to the Qur’an* (Edinburgh: University P, 1958), 156.

PROMINENCE AND DESCRIPTION

It might come as a surprise to some just how vital the doctrine of last things is in Islam. Montgomery Watt makes the point that after the doctrine of *tauheed* (God is one), belief in the Judgment is second in importance.⁴ This emphasis is seen by the great amount of attention given to the topic in the Qur'an (primarily in the Meccan chapters) and the Hadith, but also how much this subject has always occupied their minds and their pens.

Vivienne Stacey, a veteran missionary among Muslims, says this is particularly true of women, who may not know much about the Qur'an and Traditions, but are quite well-acquainted with the Judgment.⁵ A description of punishment and paradise will be covered in detail below, but it is worth repeating Stacey's further comment here that many Muslim women have the idea from the Hadith that for every 1000 men, only one will be in hell, whereas for every 1000 women, only one will be in heaven. The rest of them will be in hell.⁶

Stacey goes on to say that as a result many Muslim women spend their lives in fear of judgment and so seek protection and

⁴ W. Montgomery Watt and Richard Bell, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an* (Edinburgh: University P, 1970), 158.

⁵ Vivienne Stacey, *Women in Islam* (London: Interserve, 1995), 16.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 16-17. Stacey's unreferenced quotation that the majority of inhabitants in hell are women and few will make it to heaven is found in *Mishkat, Al-Masabih* (trans. James Robson [Lahore: Ashraf P, 1975], 1:9) The reason given is that they are ungrateful to their husbands and deficient in religion. The same is stated in the canonized tradition of *Sahih al-Bukhari* (trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan [Beirut: Dar Al Arabia, 1981], 8: 362-63, nos. 534-35). And, the canonized tradition of *Sahih al-Muslim* (trans. A.H. Siddiqui [Indianapolis, IN: Muslim Students Association, 1990], 4:1431, nos. 6597, 6600). Similarly, *Al-Bukhari*, 4:337, no. 535 gives the disturbing account of a woman who is in hell merely because she had tied up a cat without feeding it properly.

comfort against evil spirits by resorting to less than orthodox Islamic views.⁷ It must be stated at the outset, that since *all* Muslims face death and the hereafter with great fear and uncertainty, the Christian witness has much to offer from the Scriptures. This, however, must be done with humility and understanding to demonstrate hope, ultimate victory, and assurance of salvation through the finished work of Christ.⁸ Gentleness is needed because Muslims tend to look on such assurance as arrogant presumption on the will of almighty God.

Judgment in the Qur'an

Unlike some Christian theologians, Muslim scholars generally do not try to present a strict chronological order of what is going to ultimately transpire. However, from the Qur'an commentators point to frightful conditions before the final judgment. One such passage⁹ that illustrates this oft-repeated theme is "The Folding Up":

When the sun with its spacious light is folded up; When the stars fall, losing their luster; When the mountains vanish like a mirage; When the she-camels, ten months with young, are left untended; When the wild beasts are herded together in human habitations; When the oceans boil over with a swell; When the souls are sorted out being joined like with like; When the female infant buried alive, is questioned—for what crime she was killed; When the Scrolls are laid open; When the world on high is unveiled; When

⁷ Stacey, *Women*, 17.

⁸ For example, John 14-16; Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Thessalonians; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 6:11-19, 10:22; and 1 Peter.

⁹ Helmut Gatje, *The Qur'an and Its Exegesis: Selected Texts with Classical and Modern Muslim Interpretations*, trans. Alford T. Welch (Berkeley: U of CA P, 1976), 172-86. The author compares the exegesis of the following passages by the respected Qur'anic scholars Baidawi and Zamakhshari: 7:187; 40:11; 36:81; 41:19; 101:1-11; 56:4-14; 47:15; 11:106.

the blazing fire is kindled to fierce heat; And when the Garden is brought near—Then shall each know what it has put forward. So verily I call to witness the planets that recede. Go straight, or hide; And the night as it dissipates; And the dawn as it breathes away the darkness.¹⁰

Amidst this dramatic description where the sun darkens, mountains dissolve into dust, seas boil, stars fall, and she-camels abort, it says: “When the female infant buried alive, [and] is questioned for what crime she was killed.”¹¹

This, of course, refers to judgment for female infanticide in pre-Islamic Arabia that the Prophet Muhammad put a stop to. It is therefore only fair to say that Muhammad did in one sense raise the status of women; however, as previously noted, Islamic traditions repeatedly state that most of hell’s inhabitants are women.

A similar account of the coming cataclysmic events is drawn from the next Surah:

When the sky is cleft asunder; When the stars are scattered; When the oceans are suffered to burst forth; And when the graves are turned upside down—Then shall each soul know what it hath sent forward and what it hath kept back.¹²

“The Day” and “The Hour”

Among Qur’anic descriptions of the coming judgment in Islam none are more reminiscent of the Christian Scriptures than those which speak of the “The Day” or “The Hour” when

¹⁰ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an* (Beltsville: Amana Publications, 1996, Surah 81:1-18), 1608. It is regretted that this passage, not to mention other numerous passages, is given only cursory attention.

¹¹Additional passages that also mention pre-Islamic female infanticide include 2:222, 231; 4:24; 60:12; 24:33.

¹² Ali, *Meaning of the Holy Qur’an*, 82:1-5, p. 1612.

destruction will come.¹³ The more common Islamic expressions are *yawm al-qiyamah* (The Day of Resurrection), *yawm ad-din* (The Day of Judgment) or *al-yawm al-akhir* (The Last Day). As in the Bible, particularly 1 and 2 Thessalonians, “the hour” comes suddenly, announced by a shout, a thunderclap, or a trumpet blast.¹⁴

Severe Warnings

A fuller description of the punishment of hell will follow, but it cannot be stated too often that the fate of those who go astray and refuse to believe the “Warner” (Muhammad) is horrendous.¹⁵ Specifically, in Surah 75 (“Those Sent Forth”), there is the recurring phrase, “Ah woe, that Day, To the Rejecters of Truth.”

In his introduction to this early Meccan surah, Ali informs us that the refrain occurs ten times in only fifty verses —once in every five.¹⁶ “Rejecting the truth” for Muslims, it would seem, is simply a matter of unbelief. Unbelief means rejecting the Arabian Prophet (messenger) and the Qur’an (message). For

¹³ Although not necessarily a popular theme in much of Christendom today, from a concordance to the Bible, it is observed that in both the Old and New Testaments, there is frequent use of “the day” to describe how terrible the time of God’s vengeance will be. Also, the Christian Scriptures emphasize that “the hour” will be sudden and unexpected.

¹⁴ Watt and Bell, *Bell’s Introduction*, 159. Several verses suggest how that time will be heralded: 6:31; 7:187; 12:107; 22:55; 43:66; 47:18; 36:53; 80:33; 69:13; 74:8; 78:8; 78:18; 38:68.

¹⁵Initially, Muhammad is given this command, “Arise and deliver thy warning!” (74:2).

¹⁶ Ali, *Meaning of the Holy Qur’an*, 1577. Watt and Bell, *Bell’s Introduction to the Qur’an*, 160.

example, the Qur'an says, "He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah" (4:80).¹⁷

This illustrates that being Muslim is not just belief in one God. One cannot be a Muslim without strong allegiance to the Arabian Prophet. He is the last and greatest of prophets.

SIGNS AND PROPHECIES

An article from an Islamic website is entitled "50 Signs of the Day of Judgment From the Words of Allah and His Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam)." ¹⁸ Al-Muslim, in his collection of Hadith, mentions ten signs of "The Hour":

¹⁷ For a complete discussion on exactly who Muhammad is for Christians, see Jacque Jomier, *How to Understand Islam* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 140-48. The author says Muslims say they honor Jesus as a prophet and wonder why Christians cannot do the same in reference to Muhammad. This acknowledgement of Jesus, however, does not cost them anything because the role of Jesus in Islam is to "support Muhammad." For Christians to accept Muhammad as a prophet, he maintains, is to go against their own Scriptures. Jomier goes on to relate how a well-meaning Christian bishop in Tripoli did so, but much to his consternation, the following day was announced in the newspaper as a convert to Islam—certainly not what he had in mind! I accept his argument that for a Christian to accept Muhammad as a prophet is problematic. Nevertheless, having said that, I would add that we must not fall into the trap of demeaning and demonizing Muhammad as Christians have sometimes done in the past.

¹⁸ <<http://www.islaam.com/Article>> (accessed 3 April 2002). Of the fifty, 10 are past, 13 are present, and 27 are future. The first sign is the splitting of the moon, also listed in an introduction to the authentic, nine-volume Hadith, *al-Bukhari*, 1: v as the second of twelve "miracles" of the Arabian Prophet. It is referred to again in the same set, 4: 533, 534, nos. 830-323, and again in the beginning of Volume 8. Some Muslims look for a Qur'anic basis for the miracle (Surah 54:10), but many Islamic scholars deny it. For example, see Abul A'la Maududi, *The Meaning of the Qur'an* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1967), 5: 279-80. Also, Muhammad Husayn Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. Isma'il Ragi A. al Faruqi (Plainfield: American Trust Publications, 1976), lxxxviii. The Pakistani author denies the need for any miracle

Thereupon he [Muhammad] said: "It will not come until you see ten signs before and (in this connection) he made mention of the smoke, Dajjal [Anti-Christ], the beast, the rising of the sun from the west, the descent of Jesus son of Mary (Allah be please with him), the Gog and Magog, and land-slidings in three places, one in the east, one in the west and one in Arabia at the end of which fire would burn forth from the Yemen, and would drive people to the place of their assembly.¹⁹

Regrettably, it is not possible in this brief paper to discuss in detail all of the above-mentioned portents. A selection therefore is made that includes angelic involvement, certain cataclysmic events, and moral depravity.

Angelic Involvement

When Allah decides the time has come for his servant to depart, he sends the Angel of Death to seize his soul.²⁰ As soon as the corpse is buried, two angels of fearful countenance (Munkir and Nakir) arrive to question the person. The dead person sits up and the examination begins.

Hence, in an attempt to prepare a loved one for this frightful ordeal the *shahadah* is recited in the dying person's ear: "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Apostle of God." This is done in order to foil Satan's attempts to confuse and seduce believers (Muslims).

Such harsh questioning does not determine the person's final destiny, but if the wrong answer is given, it is followed by a

besides the Qur'an. This was basically Muhammad's own response to the unbeliever's demand for miracles as proof of his message: Allah could do them if he wanted, but the only miracle will be the miracle of the Qur'an (26:4; 10:20; 6:109; 29:50; 17:59, 93; 13:7; 6:37; 2:118).

¹⁹ *Al-Muslim*, 4: 1503-4, no. 6931.

²⁰ Ali, *Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, 6:61, p. 310. Other verses which indicate the degree of angelic involvement, not only in the Judgment, but all through life include 13:10-11; 82:10-12; 50:16-18.

severe beating. On the other hand, if the right answer is given, the person lies down and peacefully waits for the Last Day.²¹

It is to be noted that the Islamic understanding of predestination in all this discussion of the future is rigorous and unrelenting. It is God who ultimately decides the fate of an eternal soul—even the sin that soul may commit: “... Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed.”²²

²¹ David Waines, *An Introduction to Islam* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1995), 129-30. Also, William E. Phipps, *Muhammad and Jesus: A Comparison of the Prophets and Their Teachings* (New York: Continuum, 1996), 177. This author gives a slightly different slant to that which takes place shortly after burial. Quoting the Hadith, he says that believers who fail to give the right answers to who God is and who the Prophet is will be given a foretaste of hell. But infidels, hit with a sledgehammer, will cry out so loudly, their screams are heard everywhere. This punishment of the grave, he concludes, can be something as “small as soiling one’s clothes with urine.” Finally, since pain is so real to the corpse, Muslims would not think of cremation any more that we would think of burning someone to death. And Muslims are not buried in coffins so they can sit up when Gabriel blows the trumpet on Judgment Day.

²² Ali, *Meaning of the Holy Qur’an*, 9:51, p. 454. Also, see *Al-Mulim*, 4: 1395-98, nos. 6409-6422. The extent of pre-determinism is apparent from an argument Adam has with Moses. Adam wins the argument by proving he was destined to do what he did in the Garden. The writer then goes on to say that Allah has even “fixed the very portion of adultery which a man may indulge in.” Also, in *Mishkat, Al-Masabih*, 1: 23-33, the same story is told, but prefaced by this: “Everything is decreed, even backwardness and shrewdness.” The section adds that the Prophet says God has created some for hell and some for paradise—while still in their father’s loins. Then it says that God even decrees whether or not a man commits fornication! When God creates a man for hell, he “employs him in doing the kind of deeds that will take him there.” The section ends with the amazing statement that God says to those on this right: “To paradise, and I do not care,” and to those on his left, “To hell and I do not care.” The contrast here with the biblical concept of God is astounding. In the Bible “... He is patient ... not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9).

Earthquakes and Eclipses

One sign that deserves particular attention has to do with earthquakes. Muslims view these events (such as recently took place in Taiwan and another in Turkey where nearly 30,000 were killed), as punishment for sin.²³

The Qur'an says: "When the earth shall be shaken to its depths and the mountains shall be crumbled to atoms, becoming dust scattered abroad."²⁴ Or, as previously quoted: "When the oceans are suffered to burst forth; and when the graves are turned upside down."²⁵ Finally, "What is the Day of noise and clamor? ... It is a Day whereon men will be like moths scattered about and the mountains like carded wool."²⁶

Primary Islamic sources reveal that for Muslims the eclipse is yet another sign of impending doom. They are therefore instructed to determine when the eclipse will take place so they

²³ <<http://www.qsnetgroup.org>> (accessed 14 September 1999). From a Qur'an and Sunnah Net Group, a *khutbah* (sermon) was given following the massive earthquake in Turkey. The gist of the address is that such happenings are a sign that people must return to their "Lord and their Creator." The sermon goes on to say that these events speak to us of the fearsome power of Allah and the Day of Judgment. The speaker quotes numerous verses from the Qur'an to illustrate its relevance: 74:31; 48:7; 11:102; 17:16; 22:1-2; 80:34-36; 79:6; 7:6; 42:30; 30:41; 20:127; 77:16-19; 67:16-17; 17:59.

²⁴ Ali, *Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, 56:4-6, p. 1408.

²⁵ Ibid., 82:3-4, p. 1612.

²⁶ Ibid., 101:1-5, p. 1687. One is reminded of biblical references, first from the OT: "Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the Lord Almighty, in the day of his burning anger" (Isa 13:13). Also, the words of Jesus: "Immediately after the distress of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky and the heavenly bodies will be shaken" (Matt 24:29). And, "There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events, and great signs from heaven" (Luke 21:11).

might pray throughout its duration as Muhammad did. The Hadith records how the Arabian Prophet himself responded to an eclipse:

'Amr b. al-'as reported: When the sun eclipsed during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him), they (the people) were called to congregational prayer. The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) observed two ruku's in one rak'ah. He then stood and observed two ruku's in (the second) rak'ah. The sun then became bright, and 'Ai'isha said: "Never did I observe ruku' and prostration longer than this (ruku' and prostration)."²⁷

Moral Degradation

The canonized Hadith has this to say about prevailing moral conditions on earth on the Day of Resurrection:²⁸

²⁷*Al-Muslim*, 2: 426-34, nos. 1986-95. From the Hadith it seems that Muhammad hastened to call for congregational prayer because he was afraid of the torment of the grave. The idea seems to be that an eclipse is a sign of Allah's wrath and of the horrors of hell. Also, <london-net@muslimsonline.com> (accessed 12 August 1999). This account says that when the solar eclipse occurred in August 1999, eclipse prayers in mosques from Algeria to Iran were offered. A preacher warned worshipers in King Abdullah Mosque in Jordan that this was a sign of doomsday and that Muslims must "stick to the word of God." Again, in stark contrast to such obvious dread and anxiety, a believer in Christ has great confidence. Though we acknowledge that God's wrath is coming, we rest in his love. For example, Romans 8 talks about the groaning of the whole creation (earthquakes and natural disasters?), but the chapter emphasizes the comfort and assurance of being in Christ: "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ..." (8:1). Also, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him ..." (8:28); or, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" and finally, "Nothing shall separate us from the love of God ..." (8:39).

²⁸ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 1: 68, no. 80.

Narrated Anas Allah's Apostle said, "From among the portents of the Hour are the following:

1. Religious knowledge will be taken away by the death of Religious learned men.
2. Religious ignorance will prevail
3. Drinking of Alcoholic drinks will be very common.
4. There will be prevalence of open illegal sexual intercourse."

In the very next section of the same Hadith, an additional item is added: "Women will increase in number and men will decrease in number so much so that fifty women will be looked after by one man."²⁹

Interestingly, it seems that the use of musical instruments will precipitate much of the moral depravity and consequent punishment that characterizes this time: "Extensive false accusations of unchastity, slander and earth's settling and sinking down, as well as transformation of people into monkeys and pigs would appear." When asked when these terrible things take place, the Prophet said: "When the musical entertainment and singers appear."³⁰

PUNISHMENT AND PARADISE

Death

Whereas non-Muslims in the West may joke that there are only two things we can count on—death and taxes—Muslims as a rule do not joke about such serious matters lest such levity invite a premature occurrence. But as to its universal and unavoidable reality, there is no doubt, for in the Scripture of

²⁹ Ibid., p. 68, no. 81.

³⁰ <<http://www.islaam.com/Article>>. In this light it is understandable why the Taliban in Afghanistan sought to destroy all forms of entertainment.

Islam death is called “the certain.” The Qur’an says, “And serve thy Lord until there come unto thee the hour that is certain.”³¹

Perhaps it is this inevitability that leads Muslims to be somewhat fatalistic in the face of death. For often in fatal road accidents, Muslims will conclude that it is, after all, the will of Allah and therefore lawsuits by relatives of victims may be gradually dropped. Muslims recognize that they must submit to what God has ordained, for the Qur’an says, “Every man’s fate we have fastened around his neck”; and “... to Thee is the end of all journeys.”³²

And yet if death is certain, what comes after death for Muslims is filled with uncertainty and anxiety. Muslims have absolutely no assurance of salvation³³ and therefore often resort to folk practices to deal with fear of the unknown.

³¹ Ali, *Meaning of the Holy Qur’an*, 15:99, p. 635. Funeral attendance in Islam is very important: “A Muslim has six duties towards another Muslim: When you meet him salute him; when he issues an invitation to you, accept it; when he asks your advice give it to him; when he sneezes and praises God say, ‘God have mercy on you’; when he is ill visit him; and when he dies follow him to the grave” (*Mishkat, Al-Masabih* 1: 320).

³² *Ibid.*, 17:13, p. 677; 2:285, p. 120.

³³ The exception to this uncertainty is for those who die fighting in holy war. Nearly one-third of Volume 4 of the nine-volume, canonized collection of Bukhari’s Hadith, deals with Jihad. The Qur’an says Jihad receives the highest reward and is the surest way to paradise if the “fighter” dies: “Think not of those who are slain in Allah’s way as dead ... they live ... in the presence of their Lord (Surah 3:169). “... To him who fighteth in the cause of Allah ... soon shall we [God] give him a reward” (4:74). It would seem that some Muslims are understandably worried about their own future because of a Hadith where Muhammad names members of his own family and says he cannot save them from Allah (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, 6: 277, no. 294). Pointedly, if Muhammad could not guarantee the salvation of his own relatives how can he guarantee the salvation of Muslims today? Finally, Muhammad was not even sure that he himself would make it to heaven: “Narrated ‘Aisha: The Prophet said: ‘Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately, and receive good news because one’s deeds will not make him enter

Accordingly, in *The Unseen Face of Islam*,³⁴ Bill Musk describes the unorthodox measures taken by a Muslim family to prepare their beloved father, Muhammad, dying of tuberculosis, for the great unknown. They burned incense in the bedroom to ward off evil jinn, placed a small Qur'an under his pillow, and would not allow anyone polluted to come near. They hired a *hafiz* (one who had memorized the Qur'an) to recite portions of the holy book. Each night they sprinkled Zamzam (taken from the well outside the Ka'aba) water on his head. The elderly Muhammad himself called on saints and prophets when awakened by pain and made sure he would be facing Mecca in the final moments.³⁵

Even the Prophet Muhammad faced death with great fear and uncertainty. Al-Ghazali, the greatest of all Muslim theologians who died in A.D. 1111, describes the horror that came upon the Arabian Prophet as the hour drew near:

But despite this, his affliction was great when the agony of death came, and his groaning plain. His disquiet became compounded, and his voice was raised in moaning. His colour changed, sweat appeared on his brow ... Astonishing it is that we draw no lesson from him, despite our uncertainty regarding what we shall encounter. ... Instead we must be confident that we shall all come to Hell, and then none shall then escape therefrom save the

Paradise.' They asked, 'Even you, O Allah's Apostle?' He said, 'Even I, unless and until Allah bestows His pardon and His Mercy on me'" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, 8: 313, no. 474).

³⁴ Bill Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam: Sharing the Gospel with Ordinary Muslim* (East Sussex, UK: MARC, 1989), 127-41.

³⁵Facing Mecca, site of the Holy Ka'aba, is of great importance. For all Muslims, it is the direction to face when praying, but they may also feel it is the direction a man must face when making love to his wife. The reason is that the Ka'aba is a major source of *baraka* (blessing or spiritual force).

Godfearing. Thus we are certain of coming to it, but only conjecture when we think of thence emerging.³⁶

Terrors of the Last Day

Several traditions describe the terror that will be faced on the Day of Resurrection:

Narrated Aisha, Allah's Apostle said: "The people will be gathered barefooted, naked, and uncircumcised." I said, "O Allah's Apostle! Will the men and the women look at each other?" He said, "The situation will be too hard for them to pay attention to that."³⁷

And,

Narrated Abu Huraira, Allah's Apostle said, "The people will sweat so profusely on the Day of Resurrection that their sweat will sink seventy cubits deep into the earth, and it will rise up till it reaches the people's mouths and ears."³⁸

Yet, the most terrible moment of that day may be when each person is handed a book of deeds done on earth, and these are then weighed upon a scale. The final obstacle is a bridge to be crossed—for al-Ghazali—the most frightful of all. He referred to it as "The Traverse," for it stretched over hell and was "sharper than a sword and thinner than a hair." The saved would cross over and enter the gates of paradise, but the damned would slip off and be caught by the "angels of hell with their hooks and grapples."³⁹

³⁶ *Al-Ghazali: The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife* (Book XL of the Religious Sciences), trans. with an introduction and notes by T. J. Winter (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1995), 58. Apparently, these are non-Muslims and therefore unbelievers, for they are uncircumcised.

³⁷ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 8: 350, no. 534.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8: 354, no. 539.

³⁹ *Al-Ghazali: Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife*, 205-6.

The Fire

Some verses in the Qur'an give the strong impression that no one will escape hell: "And for this did He create them: and the Word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled: 'I will fill hell with jinns [spirits] and men all together.'"⁴⁰ And, "Not one of you but will pass over it; this is with thy Lord, a decree which must be accomplished."⁴¹

Moreover, there is no doubt among Muslims that it might not be a literal fire. The Qur'anic descriptions are vivid: it will be a place of horrible torture, suffering, and misery. Sinners will "wear fire" and having nothing but boiling water to drink. Their "garments will be pitch," and they will have yokes around their necks. It will be a place of ambush with a bar in front of them and a bar behind them.⁴²

The Hadith is even more graphic in describing the misery and suffering of the hell-fire:

Narrated An-Nu man bin Bashir: "I heard the Prophet saying, 'The least punished person of the hell fire on the Day of Resurrection will be a man under whose arch of the feet two smouldering embers will be placed, because of which his brain will boil just like Al-Mirajal (copper vessel) is boiling with water.'"⁴³

In his book on Islamic traditions, according to Al-Bukhari, Phil Parshall helps us understand the significance of boiling brains:

Boiling brains are mentioned in a number of Hadith. It is as though the slightest heat to be applied at the lower part of the body will

⁴⁰ Ali, *Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, 11:119, pp. 543-44.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 19:71, p. 759.

⁴² *Ibid.* The following verses illustrate the above: 14:48-52; 44:48; 36:8-9; 6:70; 10:8; 18:29; 78:21-30.

⁴³ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 8: 368-69, 567.

work up to the brain and cause it to boil. If this torture is prescribed for “the least punished person,” one can only imagine what is meted out as greater punishment.⁴⁴

The Garden

In contrast to the scene depicted above, the picture of heaven is totally different from that which would have been experienced in the context of Arabia. The Qur’an tells us that “The Garden” has unpolluted water, unspoiled milk, clear honey, and excellent wine.⁴⁵

It also talks about *houris* (Maidens of Paradise) who are on hand with “beautiful, big and lustrous eyes” and with “swelling breasts.” There are, needless to say, several Qur’anic references to illustrate that this means physical relationships between Muslim men and these heavenly beauties.⁴⁶

Again, the Hadith adds details as to the eternal rewards for the faithful. All this must have dazzled the imaginations of the desert dwellers who knew nothing but heat, dust, and deprivation:

Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah’s Apostle said, “The first group (of people) who will enter Paradise will be (glittering) like the moon when it is full. They will not spit or blow their noses or relieve nature. Their utensils will be of gold and their combs of gold and silver; in their censers the aloe wood will be used, and

⁴⁴ Phil Parshall, *Inside the Community: Understanding Muslims through their Traditions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 139-41. Other punishments, meted out according to various sins, include the following: molten lead poured into the ears, dragging one’s intestines behind him, or being hit with an iron hammer between the ears.

⁴⁵ It is somewhat surprising to note that although abstinence from wine helps gain admission to heaven, it will be enjoyed to the full once access is achieved (Ali, *Meaning of the Holy Qur’an*, 83:25, p. 1618).

⁴⁶ Phipps lists some of these in *Muhammad and Jesus*: 44:54; 52:20; 55:72-76; 56:34-37; 78:33.

their sweat will smell like musk. Everyone of them will have two wives; the marrow of the bones of the wives' legs will be seen through the flesh out of excessive beauty. They (i.e., the people of Paradise) will neither have differences nor hatred amongst themselves; their hearts will be as if one heart, and they will be glorifying Allah in the morning and in the evening."⁴⁷

THE ROLE OF JESUS

We turn finally to what many Muslim theologians consider the most important aspect of the end—the return of Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus is connected with eight of the fifty signs mentioned above.⁴⁸ When he returns he will slay the false Messiah (antichrist, or *dajjal*) and establish peace and righteousness on earth. The same commentators feel that the Qur'an is referring to this occasion when it says, "And on the Day of Judgment He will be a witness against them."⁴⁹

Al-Bukhari, the most respected of all traditions, describes the event in this way:

Narrated Abu Huraira, Allah's Apostle said, "By Him in whose hands my soul is, son of Mary, Jesus will shortly descend amongst you people (Muslims) as a just ruler and will break the cross and kill the pig and abolish the Jizya" (a tax taken from the non-Muslims, who are in the protection of the Muslim government).⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 4: 307, no. 468. Non-canonized Hadith go into greater detail—titillating examples of how Muslim men may think of heaven. For example, rather than two wives for each man, it speaks of 72.

⁴⁸ In fact, the Qur'an declares Mary and Jesus as a "sign for all people." See Ali, *Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, 19:21; 21:91; 23:50. Also, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 4: 324, no. 506 says that Satan touches every child except Mary and her Son.

⁴⁹ Ali, *Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, 4:159, p. 236.

⁵⁰ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 3: 233-34, no. 425.

Al-Muslim adds something to the role Jesus plays:

Certainly, the time of prayer shall come and then Jesus (peace be upon him) son of Mary would descend and would lead them in prayer. When the enemy of Allah would see him, it would (disappear) just as the salt dissolves itself in water and if he (Jesus) were not to confront them at all, even then it would dissolve completely, but Allah would kill them by his hand and he would show them their blood in his lance (the lance of Jesus Christ).⁵¹ ... And (in this connection) he made mention of the smoke, the Dajjal; the beast; the rising of the sun from the west, the descent of Jesus son of Mary (Allah be pleased with him).⁵²

From Jan Goodwin, we learn something more as to other sentiments Muslims may hold regarding what Jesus will do on that day when he comes back. In 1994 she visited a Qur'anic class for women in Kuwait, and the 33-year-old female teacher who had studied at the University of Southern California, had this to say:

There is a *hadith* that says Islam will rule the world just before the world ends. At that time, there will be a war between Muslims and Jews, a lot of killing. Jesus Christ will guide the Muslim troops as a Muslim. We believe he will come again and break the cross. He will show he was a prophet, not the son of God. The world will benefit when it is Muslim. Everyone will feel at ease.⁵³

⁵¹ *Al-Muslim*, 4: 1501, no. 6925.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 1504, no. 6931.

⁵³ Jan Goodwin, *Price of Honor: Muslim Women Lift the Veil of Silence on the Islamic World* (New York: Little, Brown, 1994), 188. It seems appropriate to mention that there are some differences in the majority Sunni and the minority Shi'ite position as to the role of Jesus. Both undoubtedly revere him but it seems that Shi'ites reduce his significance. Like Sunnis, the Shi'ites say that he will return but his role will be subordinate to the *al-Mahdi*, the 12th Imam (successor and descendant of Muhammad). Shi'ites feel that Jesus will come and at the time of prayer, will stand behind the Mahdi. See Neal Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity* (Albany: State U of NY, 1991), 167-77.

Of course, the difficulty for Islam is how to reconcile the return of Jesus with the widely-held Muslim view that he never died. The Qur'an says: "... They killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them. ..." This too is problematic because it means that all—including Mary—were ultimately deceived.⁵⁴

Obviously this has also been a problem for many Muslims⁵⁵ because they cannot explain the resurrection, ascension, and appearances of Christ. The alternative is to suggest that he was taken up to heaven without dying and that he will somehow die at a later date. Some speculate that he may have died a natural death sometime after the crucifixion and remained dead for several hours, after which he was raised to life.⁵⁶ Ahmadiyya Muslims, considered a heretical sect, claim that God rescued Jesus from the cross, and that he later went up to Kashmir where he is buried. Frankly, there is no historical evidence for any of these spurious claims, and it takes far less faith to believe the NT account that he died and rose again the third day.

In light of how desperately peace is now needed in the Middle East, the last book of the OT prophecies how the Messiah will return: "Then suddenly the Lord will come to his temple ...

⁵⁴ The present writer recalls that a former Muslim said he accepted Christ's death and resurrection because Jesus' mother believed it. He said, "You might fool others but you can't fool your mother." Another Muslim had this to say: "Your Prophet is greater than our Prophet for the following reasons: Yours was a Prophet at birth; ours became one at the age of 40. Yours did miracles; ours did none. Yours is alive; ours is dead."

⁵⁵ Ali, *Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, 4:157-59, 235-36. It would seem that Muhammad never knew that the crucifixion of Jesus was relative to Christian beliefs. It is denied as the unfounded calumny of the Jews. Apparently the Arabian Prophet knew nothing of the atonement.

⁵⁶ Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 284-85.

he will be like a refiner's fire ... for judgment"⁵⁷ Moreover, Zechariah adds that the inhabitants of Jerusalem will finally recognize the Messiah and that they will "mourn for him as one mourns for an only child"⁵⁸ One must remember that in and around Jerusalem are many Muslims, and it is not unreasonable to believe that like the Jews, many Muslims will finally recognize him for how he is and believe in him as the only Savior, the only way to God.⁵⁹

CONCLUSION

It is apparent from the discussion above that both Muslims and Christians have numerous common eschatological themes. Similar to Christians, Muslims consider the doctrine of last things to be of paramount importance and identify various signs as the hour draws near. Among the many signs that signal doomsday, a few were selected as particularly significant: natural disasters, cataclysmic disturbances in the cosmos, and deepening moral degradation in society.

Nevertheless, this article has pointed out that though Muslims and Christians have similar terms, often they have

⁵⁷ Malachi 3:1-5. The passage goes on to say that the Messiah will judge the specific sins of adultery and oppression of the fatherless and aliens—in Israel, a nation that has legalized abortion and homosexuality. Although the practice of suicide bombing by Palestinians cannot be justified or condoned, Israel is a nation that has brutally oppressed the Palestinian people.

⁵⁸ Zechariah 12:10.

⁵⁹ This seems to be the thrust of Matthew 24:30 as well: "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn " One recalls how that after his resurrection Jesus proved his identity to doubting disciples by showing them his wounds (Luke 24:39-40). Upon his dramatic return to the troubled city of Jerusalem, he will do so again with irrefutable evidence.

significantly different meanings. It was noted that a major distinction is how both traditions view the role of Jesus.

Since Christ conquered death, Christians do not face death and the grave with abject fear, but rather with peace and confidence. It is here that Christians can and must witness with assurance that faith in Jesus as the crucified, risen, and coming Messiah makes all the difference in this world—and the world to come.

REFERENCES CITED

Ali, Abdullah Yusaf

1996 *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an.*
Beltsville: Amana Publications.

Bell, Richard

1958 *Introduction to the Qur'an.*
Edinburgh: University Press.

Cragg, Kenneth

1988 *Readings in the Qur'an.*
London: HarperCollins Publishers.

Gatje, Helmut

1976 *The Qur'an and its Exegesis: Selected Texts with Classical and Modern Muslim Interpretations*, translated by Alford T. Welch. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Geisler, Norman and Abdul Saleeb

1993 *Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross.*
Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Goodwin, Jan

1994 *Price of Honor: Muslim Women Lift the Veil of Silence on the Islamic World.*
New York: Little, Brown and Company.

Haykal, Muhammad Husayn

1976 *The Life of Muhammad*, translated by
Ismail'il Ragi A. al-Faruqi.
Plainfield: American Trust Publications.

Islaam.com

2002 <<http://wee.islaam.com/Article>.

Jomier, Jacque

1989 *How to Understand Islam.*
New York: Crossroad.

London-net

1999 <London-net@muslimsonline.com>

Khan, Muhammad Muhsin

1981 *Sahih al-Bukhari, Vols. 1-9.*
Beirut: Dar Al Arabia.

Maududi, Abul A'la

n.d. *The Meaning of the Qur'an, Vols. 1-6.*
Lahore: Islamic Publications, Ltd.

Musk, Bill

1989 *The Unseen Face of Islam: Sharing the Gospel with Ordinary Muslims.*
East Sussex: MARC.

Parshall, Phil

1994 *Inside the Community: Understanding Muslims through their Traditions.*
Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Phipps, Willam E.

1996 *Muhammad and Jesus: A Comparison of the Prophets and Their Teachings.*

New York: The Continuum Publishing
Company.

Qur'an and Sunnah Discussion Group
1999 <<http://www.qsnetgroup.org>>

Robson, James
1975 *Mishkat al-Masabih, Vols. 1-2.*
Lahore: Ashraf Press.

Stacey, Vivienne
1995 *Women in Islam.* London: Interserve.

Waines, David
1995 *An Introduction to Islam.*
New York: Cambridge University Press.

Watt, Montgomery and Richard Bell
1970 *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an.*
Edinburgh: University Press.

Winter, T. J.
1995 *Al-Ghazali: The Remembrance of Death and
the Afterlife* (Book XL of the Religious
Sciences).
Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society.

Warren Larson is the Academic Program Director and Associate Professor of Muslim Studies at Columbia International University. He served as a missionary in Pakistan for 23 year and has written extensively on Islam, including *Islamic Ideology and Fundamentalism in Pakistan: Climate for Conversion to Christianity?* He and his wife live in Columbia, South Carolina.

Poetry in the Song of Songs: A Literary Analysis. Patrick Hunt. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. 368 pages. \$42.95.

Patrick Hunt, director of the Stanford Alpine Archaeology Project at Stanford University in California, has written a poetic analysis cataloging the various literary devices employed by the biblical author of the Song of Songs. By his own admission, Hunt's study is not about theology or religion (1), nor is it a commentary (19). It is an investigation concerning the poetry of this ancient love song.

Concerning introductory matters, Hunt is brief in his remarks (only nineteen pages). While he recognizes the beauty of the poem and its association with the royal Solomon, he rejects Solomonic authorship based on the perceived late dating of the book and holds to an unknown author and date of composition (18). Though he does not discuss its overall structure, he sees the Song as a "compilation of songs" (13). The book may have been intended to be recited at Hebrew nuptials or used as "as a prelude to lovemaking, in the sense of emotional and mental foreplay" for mature lovers (10). While he recognizes the many ways the book has been interpreted over the centuries by Jews and Christians alike, he rejects its allegorical reading and chooses to recognize its simple and direct language of sexual love between a man and a woman to which anyone who has loved can relate. Although Hunt follows a literal hermeneutic, he believes "that we cannot reconstruct one meaning for this great poem" (19).

In chapter 2 (21-65), Hunt analyzes the "figurative language of desire" such as simile, paronomasia, chiasmus, anabasis, pleonasm, meiosis, metonymy, topographia, parallelism, and others. While his investigation concerning any one device is not exhaustive, he offers enough examples of each so the reader can understand how they function within the Song. While one may argue over Hunt's labeling of individual literary devices (even he questions if the ancient biblical author was intentional in his employment of each of these devices [28]), his study is a helpful one since no work in the Song to date has attempted to catalog so many different devices in one work.

Hunt investigates paronomasia or wordplay in chapter 3 (66-81). Chapter 4 (67-101) is given to the study of the analysis of sensory images which he numbers at over 200 (99). Chapter 5 (103-39) looks at the fertility imagery found in the flowers, fruits, and spices and their erotic connections while chapter 6 (141-60) presents a study of the animal imagery found in the Song. Chapter 7 (161-80) explores the metaphor of eating and drinking in connection with the lovers' desire for one another.

If scholars are correct that parallelism is the heart of Hebrew poetry, then chapter 8 (181-243) may be the most profitable chapter of this book. Although following his abbreviated classification of parallelism by other scholars is a tad laborious for the reader, Hunt has provided an introductory platform to discuss the various types of parallelism evident in the poem. While his study of parallelism is not exhaustive (although he analyzes over 75 examples) nor does he suggest the rhetorical function for his examples, his study lays a foundation for others to build upon based on the importance of this literary device for biblical Hebrew poetry.

Chapter 9 (245-77) evaluates "the more than 70 images" which are used to convey "wealth, authority and security" (245). Chapter 10 (279-319) observes the use of simile and chapter 11 (321-47), the use of metaphor as it relates to the two lovers. A twelve-page bibliography and index conclude the work.

While this book is not, as its back cover proclaims, a "ground-breaking study," it is a helpful reference for those who study the poetry of the Song or who have an interest in biblical poetry in general. Those without Hebrew will benefit from the book. However, those able to read Hebrew will be disappointed that extended examples were not provided in the original language.

Although the reader may disagree with Hunt's identification and/or labeling of various literary devices and may not see paronomasia beneath every vine as Hunt does, this work is an aid in recognizing the poetic tools the author used to craft this ancient love song. Hunt does go too far, however, when he calls the Song "this Hebrew *Kamasutra*" (10) and makes numerous comparisons between the ancient love poem and this Indian sex

manual. While the Song is not ashamed of its eroticism, it is not, nor is its purpose to be, a “how-to sex manual.”

This work lacks two items: first (and to be fair, it was not Hunt’s purpose), a suggestion as to what rhetorical function each device plays and second, what is the theological effect of each device as intended by the biblical author. These items would have been an asset to those who see a rhetorical and theological purpose for the Song. While cataloging literary devices is helpful and is a necessary step in exegeting poetry, this book falls short in completing the exegetical process. A second weakness is a lack of careful proofreading. The presence of words running together (68, 330), inconsistent footnote number placement (68), incorrect form in the bibliography, missing articles (59), misplacement of end quotes (158, 220) and end brackets (145), to name just a few “mistakes,” are distracting at best.

Reviewed by Dr. Mark McGinniss
Associate Professor of Old Testament Literature,
Language and Exegesis
Baptist Bible Seminary, Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania