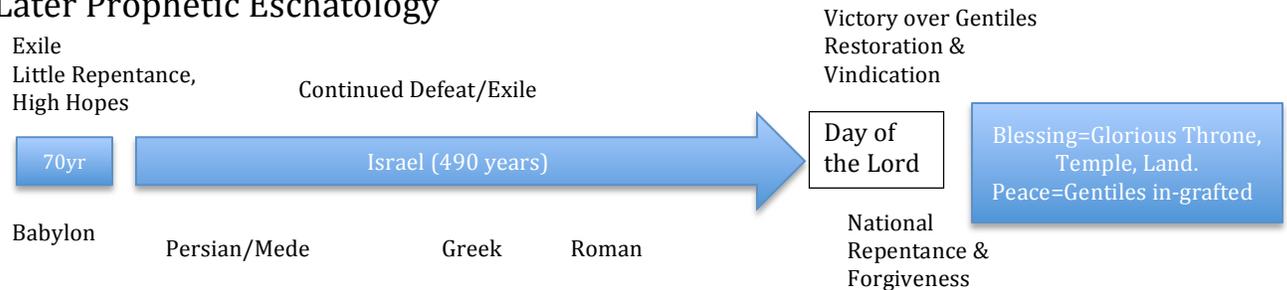


## Interpreting the New Testament

### Reading the Gospels (cont.)

OT Eschatology: What was Israel hoping for?

### Later Prophetic Eschatology



### I. The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry

#### Luke 4

<sup>18</sup> *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

<sup>20</sup> *And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup> And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ... <sup>29</sup> And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. <sup>30</sup> But passing through their midst, he went away.*

#### Mark 1:15

<sup>14</sup> *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,<sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*

### II. Parables

A. Matthew 13:10-17 Disciples ask Jesus: "Why speak in parables?"

*[11] And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. [12] For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. [13] This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. [14] Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:*

*““You will indeed hear but never understand,  
and you will indeed see but never perceive.”*

*[15] For this people's heart has grown dull,  
and with their ears they can barely hear,  
and their eyes they have closed,  
lest they should see with their eyes  
and hear with their ears  
and understand with their heart  
and turn, and I would heal them.’*

*[16] But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.*

*[17] For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see  
what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*

1. v. 11 Given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God
2. v. 12 One who gets it will understand more; one who rejects it will be more confused...Parables themselves enact a judgment!

B. Parables are not illustrations, but are used in response to Old Covenant anticipation of the coming of the Kingdom of God.

C. Parables elicit strong reactions. Parables open up a wider range of imaginative and volitional responses among listeners and readers than the discourse of law and purity. Parables are an invitation to see God and the world differently.

*“A parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature and life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, leaving the hearer in enough doubt about its significance to tease it into active thought.” C.H. Dodd*

#### **D. Understanding the Parables: Point per Parable**

1. Not allegories: In an allegory every part has a “hidden” meaning foreign to the story itself
2. Parables typically have only one point.
3. To interpret parables you must locate the point of reference in the context. The point of the parable is not the point of the reference but the intended response to the story as a whole.

### **III. Theological Emphases of The Four Gospels**

#### **Matthew: Jesus as Moses**

1. Highlights Jesus’ teaching ministry
2. He is both “deliverer” and “law-giver”
3. Five Books of Moses paralleled in the Five Discourses of Jesus
  - a. 5:1-7:27; 10:5-42; 13:1-52; 18:1-35; and 23:1-25:46
  - b. Each section ends with the phrase “When Jesus had finished these words...”
  - c. Jesus demonstrates great continuity with the Torah: He did not come to abolish the Law and the prophets but to fulfill them (5:17-20)

- d. Not an expansion of the Law but an intensification. Why?
- 4. The church is the community who are taught (disciples, great commission)

### **Mark: Taking up the Cross**

1. Emphasis on a call to discipleship and following Jesus to the cross
2. Mark contains very little explicit ethical teaching.
3. Identity of Jesus is crucial. The central question in Mark: Who do you say that I am? (Mark 8:29)
  - a. Mark 1:1 tells the readers he is Jesus Christ, Son of God, but throughout none of the characters knows—except the demons. This provides tension between what we know and what they know.
  - b. Throughout the first half Jesus seems so powerful and successful we expect things to work out differently/triumphantly
  - c. Disciples are afraid and have no faith. Jesus' identity is a secret for them to know, but they struggle to grasp it. They fall away in time of trial.
4. Mark's style is short, choppy, and abrupt.

### **Luke: Power of the Spirit**

1. Luke's narrative is a continuation of the Old Testament biblical history. Jesus' life is a fulfillment of promises to Israel.
2. Emphasis falls less on Moses as law-giver and more on Moses as prophetic liberator for his people. Salvation becomes a key word.
3. Luke is more world-affirming. By that I mean, the gospel is for the nations.
4. Luke's style is intellectual, well-written, and a well-constructed narrative.

### **John: That You May Believe**

1. Jesus is concerned with belief.
2. Jesus is God in the flesh. Jesus is often imaged as the new Temple (i.e. God's presence).
3. The community is told to love one another.
4. The world is an enemy of God, at war with him. Yet, God so loved the world.
5. John uses symbolism and emphasizes big abstract concepts like life, truth, and love.

## Interpreting Paul and Other NT Epistles

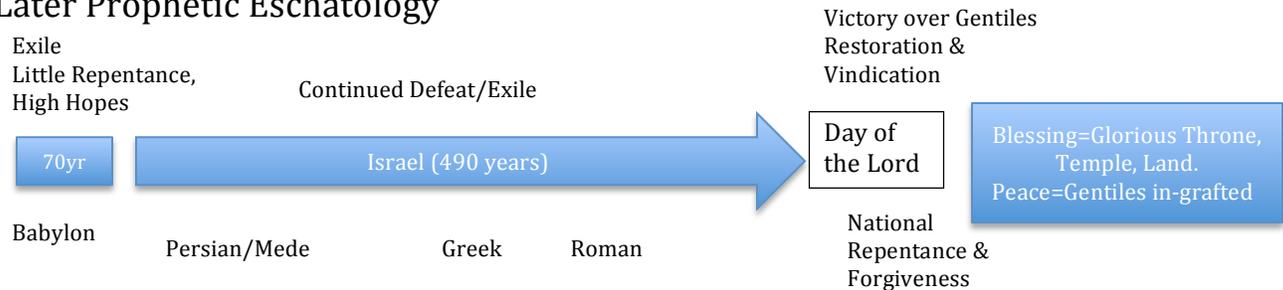
### **I. Importance of Paul**

- A. Author of 13 books of the 27 books of the New Testament
- B. Key source (though not only source!) for major theological terms justification, sanctification, faith, and church.
- C. In the genre of epistolary literature, he composed 13 of 20 NT epistles

## II. Context for Paul's Theology: The covenant, Saul's (pre-conversion Paul's) hope, and Jesus

### A. OT Eschatology: What was Israel hoping for?

#### Later Prophetic Eschatology



### B. Plight to Solution or Solution to plight

1. Did Paul see Jesus then convert and then realize the problem Jesus came to address? Or, did he believe there was a problem and convert when he saw that Jesus was the answer to it?

a. **Self-righteous Pharisee**-Traditionally, scholars have said Paul was a self-righteous Pharisee who didn't realize that salvation was by faith and not by works. His conversion revealed the latent problem:

Solution to Plight

b. Covenant zealot-Others have said Paul was acutely aware of Israel's sin and he hoped God would provide the solution: Plight to Solution

c. The answer is somewhere in-between.

2. What was the plight? Did Israel need a savior?

a. Signs of trouble: Exile, no-king, corrupt Temple

b. How did Israel get into this trouble?

c. How might an OT prophet encourage them to avoid punishment?

## III. Who was Paul?

### A. Zealous Pharisee

#### 1. Self-identification

*<sup>2</sup>Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. <sup>3</sup>For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God<sup>[b]</sup> and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— <sup>4</sup> though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law,<sup>[c]</sup> blameless. <sup>7</sup>But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (Philippians 3:2-7)*

#### 2. Zeal and covenant faithfulness

-Phinehas-Numbers 25:1-9

### B. Saul/Paul and the Christians

Acts 9

*<sup>1</sup>But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup>and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*

-Who did Paul seek to kill/arrest? Why?

Acts 9 (cont.)

*<sup>3</sup> Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. <sup>4</sup>And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" <sup>5</sup>And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. <sup>6</sup>But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." <sup>7</sup> The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. <sup>8</sup>Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. <sup>9</sup>And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*

C. Conversion: **What made the difference?**

1. What difference did seeing the resurrected Jesus make?
2. What were the implications for his hope (eschatology)?

D. Christ and the changing of the Ages

1. If Christ is raised from the dead, then God's promises have been fulfilled. You no longer have to look forward to their coming.
2. If Christ is raised from the dead, the other aspects of God's eschatological blessing would start to become true, too.
  - Forgiveness of sin
  - Gentiles included
  - Redemptive-history concluded? We are now in the end-times.

#### **IV. The Law and Justification**

A. What does Paul mean by "law"? For Paul it meant the Torah, the Law of Moses. Obeying the Law before Christ came meant that someone was being faithful to the covenant. They were still, as they had always been, saved by the promise, though.

1. A major issue in the early church was the question of the Law of Moses.
  - a. Were Christians still obliged to obey the law of Moses and keep the covenant?
  - b. Were they free from the law and a new people?
2. Paul wants to argue that they are organically connected to the OT people, they are the new Israel (Rom 11), but they are in a different place in redemptive-history. This changes their identity, mission, and understanding of their future hope.

B. Is the Law bad?

1. NT scholars have often made Paul sound antinomian (against the law). They read his argument about salvation by faith not works, and heighten the tension between Law and Gospel. How did Paul view the Law?
2. Galatians 3:21ff

*“Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”*

*Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.”*

3. Romans 7:7f; 8:3

*“What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin...sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So the law is holy, and righteous and good.”*

*...For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.”*

4. The Law is good, but for anyone “in Adam” it will produce condemnation and death.

### C. Christ and the New Age: Justification by Faith Alone

1. Israel could not bear the law (though someone still needed to!) Israel had the same problem as the world, it was “in Adam”.

2. Christ was the true and faithful Israel (and the last Adam, Rom. 5; 1 Cor. 15). He lived the full life of righteous obedience to the Law.

3. His death paid the penalty of sin for his people.

4. For those “in Christ” you are now in the “end times.” For those not “in Christ”, you are “in Adam” you still in the “old age”.

5. You are justified by Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. This is received by faith alone.

### New Testament Eschatology



### D. What if you continued to observe the Law?

1. You would be denying Christ’s fulfillment of the Law

2. You would be continuing to live in the old age.

3. The Law would bring your sin to light and condemn you.

## E. The Law in Romans and Galatians

1. Galatians: Jewish followers of Jesus were infiltrating the Galatian church and telling the Gentiles that they would need to be circumcised (i.e. keep Torah) to be saved. Paul argues that this misunderstands the significance of Christ. We are now saved by faith in Christ's work.
2. Romans: (The opposite problem) The Jews were kicked out of Rome by Emperor Claudius for a time. Gentiles gained prominence in the church of Rome. When Jews returned they were not welcome back. Paul argues that Christianity DOES INDEED have its organic root in Judaism and gentiles are grafted-in.

## V. Centrality of belief

### A. Indicative and Imperative:

1. Is Paul inconsistent? Are we to rest in "grace" or "work out our salvation"? Paul can tell us to "be holy" (imperative) and that we "are holy" (indicative).

*"the new life in its moral manifestation is at one time proclaimed and posited as the fruit of the redemptive work of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit—the indicative; elsewhere, however, it is put with no less force as a categorical demand—the imperative. And the one as well as the other occurs with such force and consistency that some have indeed spoken of a 'dialectical paradox' and of an 'antinomy.'" –Herman Ridderbos*

2. *The imperative is ALWAYS linked to an indicative, and the indicative ALWAYS precedes the imperative.*

Philippians 2:12-13

Colossians 1:29; 3:3ff.

Ephesians 3:20

Romans 6

3. The two are fundamentally linked. The indicative is conditional on the imperative BUT this does not change the order!

*"Colossians 3:1 'If you then were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above.' 'If' in the first clause is certainly not merely hypothetical. It is a supposition from which the imperative goes out as an accepted fact. But at the same time it emphasizes that if what is demanded in the imperative does not take place, that which is supposed in the first clause would no longer be admissible (cf. e.g., Rom. 8:9; Col. 2:20; Gal. 5:25)." -Ridderbos*

4. When we apply this, it becomes incredibly great news!

- a. The new life in you is really there, and not just a sign of life. It is not dormant but a militant life battling sin.

- b. Each of us experiences the "now" and "not yet" of sanctification.

### B. Flesh and Spirit

1. Does he hate the body?

Galatians 5:16-25

Romans 8:1-11

2. For Paul, “flesh” is identified with sinful humanity, living in the old age, and “in Adam.”

3. Spirit is identification of those empowered by the Holy Spirit. They are of the new age and are “in Christ.”

#### C. Missionary Paul (Three Missionary Journeys)

What is the Paul’s motivation for missions?

Romans 15:14-21

### VI. How to read Epistles

#### A. Someone else’s mail?

1. Epistles are letters, not narratives, not poetry, not a series of wisdom sayings or commands. Can we read other people’s mail? What problems does this pose?

2. Original message, original audience: we must try to piece together as much information as possible, but we have all we need.

a. We share a great deal with the original audience, including our place in redemptive-history.

b. We may agree or differ with their particular situation, our interpretive task is to compare and contrast our situations, but never to undermine Paul’s theological point.

3. God’s Word to Us is the same as His Word to them.

a. Most of his epistles are directed at the community of faith

b. Epistles were understood to be read by all

Colossians 4:16

*<sup>16</sup>And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.*

Ephesians

Entire letter is probably written for circulation

2 Peter 3:15-16

Peter commends reading Paul’s letters

#### B. Following the Argument

1. If the author is writing a letter, why do we treat it like a series of aphorisms or commands?

2. Read the whole letter through in one sitting. This is how you’d read any other letter. Most NT epistles are, almost exclusively, one long argument.

3. Think in paragraphs rather than clauses/verses. This will help you avoid proof-texting.

4. Pay attention to transitional clues “for,” “therefore,” “now,” (see indicative and imperative). They help unpack the logical argument.