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*"vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo"*

Colossians 3:3

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**THE END IN THE BEGINNING:  
A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL CATECHISM FOR YOUNG AND OLD**

**Judges**

James T. Dennison, Jr.

What is the next (seventh) book of the OT?

Judges

Why is it called “Judges”? Are the main characters legal figures like modern day courtroom figures?

No, the title “Judges” is derived from the Hebrew name for the book (*shopetîm*) meaning “leaders” responsible for making decisions (“judging,” cf. Dt 16:18). In the book of Judges, these leaders are charismatic (i.e., filled with God’s Spirit) leaders who are instruments of divine deliverance (*magnalia Dei*). **NB:** they are “Spirit-filled” in order to “deliver” or “save” (Heb., *yasha*, e.g., 2:16, 18; 3:31; 6:14; 10:1; 13:5 ) God’s people. Hence, they are labeled *môshia* (cf. 3:9, 15; 6:36; 12:3) or “saviors” (“deliverers”).

What is the nature of the era of the Judges?

Chronologically, it extends from the death of Joshua (ca. 1390 B.C.) to the anointing of Saul as the first King of Israel (ca. 1050 B.C.)

So the whole period is more than 300 years in length?

Yes, just as one of the Judges (Jephthah) confirms in chapter 11:26

What else characterizes the period of the Judges?

It is an age of transition—an intermediate age between the theocracy (Moses to Joshua) and the monarchy (Saul/David to Zedekiah)

Outline the unfolding organic continuum of the history of redemption.

Patriarchal Age (2200-1800 B.C.)  
Age of Egyptian Bondage (1800-1447 B.C.)  
Age of the Theocracy under Moses and Joshua (1447-1390 B.C.)  
Age of the Judges (1390-1050 B.C.)  
Age of the Monarchy (1050-586 B.C.)

How does the era of the Judges interface retrospectively and prospectively?

It looks back to Joshua (1:1) and looks forward to the age of a king/monarchy (21:25)

What does this transition suggest?

The theocracy was not intended by God to be permanent—it too was transient as it opened up on a “more excellent way” in (especially) the Davidic Monarchy (a “king after God’s own heart”)

When did these transient eras come to an end?

At the revelation of the “kingdom of heaven” through the incarnation of heaven’s eternal Son and everlasting King of Kings, our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, all the OT eras are anticipating (even demonstrating in their own way, i.e., via the eschatological interface) the coming advent of the King and his Kingdom.

So the book of Judges (as the books of Genesis through Joshua) is Christ-centered?

Yes

How?

By revealing in the “days of the Judges” a deliverance for the sinful and rebellious people of God from their enemy oppressors through Spirit-filled “saviors”.

These “saviors” are projecting/anticipating the once-for-all (eschatological) Savior, Jesus Christ?

Yes, as the list of some of them in Hebrews 11:32 makes clear. In fact, “by faith” (in its eschatological aspect), these OT deliverers mirror the redemption from fear, oppression and death which the people of God need, long for and possess once-and-for-all in Jesus Christ.

What is the narrative/dramatic pattern of the book of Judges?

It is the programmatic cycle (which you also find summarized in Neh 9:26-28 and Ps 106:39-46).

1. Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord (2:11, etc.)  
What evil? Generally, idolatry of fertility worship, i.e., Baal and Ashtaroth (2:11, 13, etc.).
2. God was angry with them (2:14, etc.)
3. God delivered them to their enemy oppressors (2:14, etc.)
4. The sons of Israel cry to the Lord (2:18; cf. 3:9, etc.)
5. God raised up “judges” (2:16, etc.) who deliver them through the Spirit (3:10)
6. The land has rest (3:11, etc.)

Note the pattern of redemptive-historical reversal in this paradigm (punitive reversal):

1. Israel’s evil, specifically, idolatry, is a reversal of turning from the Lord God.
2. God’s anger burning against Israel is a reversal of his grace and mercy to his people.
3. God’s giving Israel over to an enemy oppressor is a reversal of their peace and freedom from the persecution of hostile unbelievers (pagans).

And now note the reversal of the reversal:

1. Israel cries to the Lord in a reversal of devotion to idol gods.
2. God sends a deliverer to save and redeem his people in a reversal of the oppressors he had sent.
3. God grants the land peace and freedom for a time in a reversal of his canceling *shalom* and liberty via the hostile forces of darkness.

The redemptive pattern of reversal is ultimately an eschatological end to the protological beginning of the Judges paradigm. It requires a protological intervention of an eschatological *moshia* (deliverer, savior) who comes (and will come) to *yasha* (deliver, save) once and for all.

Are most of the elements of this paradigm present in the narratives of the ‘major’ Judges?

Yes, as reported in the careers of Othniel, Ehud, Deborah/Barak, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson

Are these elements of this paradigm present in the narratives of the ‘minor’ Judges?

No, as found in the careers of Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon

How many ‘major’ Judges are there?

Six

How many ‘minor’ Judges are there?

Six

How is the symmetry of six and six different?

The narrative of each ‘major’ Judge is introduced by the phrase “Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord”; the narrative of the ‘minor’ Judges does not contain this formula. Also the ‘major’ figures have extensive or full-bodied narratives (so-called ‘round’ characters). The ‘minor’ figures have very brief narratives with little more than the duration of the time they were “judging Israel” (so-called ‘flat’ characters). **NB:** interestingly, Jephthah’s story is bracketed by most of these ‘minor’ figures—two beforehand (Tola and Jair, 10:1-5) and three afterward (Ibzan, Elon and Abdon, 12:8-15)

What does the general narrative pattern of the book indicate?

That there is a narrative downward spiral of the story of Israel in the transition between theocracy and monarchy

If the book is arranged chronologically (i.e., Othniel to Jephthah, perhaps 1380- ca. 1080 B.C.), how do chapters 17-21 fit into the paradigm?

They represent the lowest point of the downward spiral with the concomitant horror of the dismembered concubine introducing the final litany rehearsal “no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (21:25). **NB:** it may be the case, however, that chapters

17-21 are epexegetical of the entire era of the Judges, i.e., this is an illustration of the “evil” which was being done by Israel “in the eyes of the Lord” in the days of transition from Joshua to Saul.

So where is the end in this horrible beginning?

Even as the earthly Canaan appears to be more a ‘Hell’ than a ‘Heaven’ (and thus puts an end to all earthly utopian myths and programs because endemic human sin—brutal sin—turns them into hellish nightmares), the stunning grace of God invades the souls of some so as to cause heaven’s ‘saviors’ to bring peace and rest temporarily. This augurs the eschatological reality of the truly heavenly Canaan where no sin abides, nor oppressive enemy intrudes and where the Lord God of that eschaton is present in his perfect, holy, righteous, redemptive glory and all inhabitants do what is right in his eyes.

Who is the first major Judge?

Othniel (3:7-11)

But he has been introduced before in the history of redemption?

Yes, though not mentioned by name, he is undoubtedly present in Joshua 14:5-15, when faithful Caleb leads the sons of Judah in the conquest of Hebron and environs. Joshua 15:13-19 describes the bravery of Othniel in seizing Kiriath-sepher as the dowry of Caleb’s daughter, Achsah. These narratives connect Caleb, Othniel and Joshua to the tribe of Judah—the tribe which inaugurates the book of Judges (1:2ff). The leadership of Judah in the conquest and settlement of the land is proleptic of the “lion of the tribe of Judah” who is Lord of the heavenly Canaan.

Is there narrative historical linkage between the book of Joshua and the book of Judges?

Yes, a reciprocal hook links the death of Joshua at the close of the one (Josh 24:29) and the aperture of the other (Jdg 1:1). But more than this, the recursive literary narrative symmetry emphasizing the preeminence of God’s faithful servants (Joshua and Caleb) as well as the prominence of the tribe of Judah (Israel’s ‘royal’ tribe) unfolds in continuum with the ‘conqueror’/‘savior’ role of Othniel with respect to Kiriath-sepher and Cushan-rishathaim.

Is Othniel a retrospective as well as a prospective figure?

Yes, in Judges 1:11-15, we rehearse his role retrospectively at the conquest (Josh 15:13-19), even as the same duplicate narrative anticipates his future role in Judges 3:8-11.

What is the difference?

In Othniel’s conquest of Debir (Kiriath-sepher), he captures a local Canaanite fortress. In his defeat of Cushan-rishathaim, he prevails over an international Mesopotamian foe (Jdg 3:10). All this is by the Lord’s “hand” in his life in which Othniel saves God’s people from regional as well as ecumenical foes. He overcomes national and trans-national Gentiles.

Does Othniel's role in the book of Judges match the full or complete paradigm of reversal noted above?

Yes, as the Judge who inaugurates the book of Judges, his career contains all of the narrative dramatic elements of the reversal paradigm explicitly, i.e., setting the pattern for all the Judges (major and minor) even where elements of the reversal paradigm are not explicit.

1. Israel's evil of worshipping Baals and Asheroth (3:7)
2. God's "anger" burns against Israel (v. 8)
3. God brings an oppressor (v. 8)
4. Israel cries to the Lord (v. 9)
5. God raises up a deliverer (*moshia*) (v. 9), who is anointed by God's Spirit (v. 10)
6. God grants peace and rest to the land (v. 11)

Isn't the Othniel narrative full of doublets?

Yes: the protagonist (Othniel) is named twice (vv. 9, 11); he is twice identified as the "son of Kenaz" (vv. 9, 11). The antagonist (Cushan-rishathaim) is named four times (twice two, vv. 8, 10). His name literally means "Cushan of Double Wickedness". His native region is Mesopotamia or literally *Aram-naharim* (which means "Aram of the Two Rivers", i.e., the Tigris and the Euphrates).

The doublets of proper names and geography feed the double narrative pattern of the drama

What do you mean?

The initial narrative drama features the antagonists and the downward spiral of Israel's suffering under his oppression (vv. 8-9). The successive narrative drama features the protagonist and the upward spiral of Israel's deliverance under his Spirit-empowered leadership. The double plot narrative (downward and upward vectors) reinforces the double sequence of fall into sin and suffering with the rise into deliverance and salvation via a redeemer figure.

Please reflect upon the protological/eschatological motif/theme for me here.

Othniel is the protological judge-deliverer, but he can never be the eschatological judge-deliverer. He may participate in the mystery of the eschatological Judge and Savior, but he is not that One himself. A greater than Othniel must conform himself to the downward (sin bearer) and upward (sin deliverer) spiral if the Israel of God of the end of the age is to have permanent rest and peace forever and ever. The Lord Jesus Christ is that Spirit-filled deliverer!

Who is the next Judge?

Ehud, the Benjamite (3:15), the left-handed messenger of God's eschatological message to the tyrannical King of Moab, Eglon (3:12).

What is Ehud's "eschatological message"?

## Judgment and Death by the Lord God of Israel

Are all six elements of the Judges narrative paradigm which characterizes chapter 2 and Othniel (3:7-11) present in the Ehud narrative?

Five of the six are explicit. God's burning "anger" is implicit in the language "the Lord strengthened Eglon" (3:12).

What is unique about the literary pattern of the Ehud narrative?

It is an elaborate chiasm carefully dramatizing the literary reflection and reversal of the narrative.

Please outline the chiasm (I am indebted to Wayne Brouwer, *The Literary Development of John 13-17: A Chiastic Reading* [2000], p. 74 for suggesting this pattern. I have modified his proposed structure to make it conform, in my opinion, more precisely to the pattern of the Hebrew text).

- A. Israel subdued by Moab (12)
- B. Moab "smites" Israel (13)
- C. Ehud goes to Moab (15, 17)
- D. Ehud turns from "idols" at Gilgal (19a)
- E. Eglon's "attendants" leave him (19d)
- F. Eglon alive alone in his roof chamber (20)
- G. Ehud draws his sword (21a)
- H. Ehud thrusts his sword (21c)
- G'. Ehud leaves his sword (22)
- F'. Eglon dead alone in his roof chamber (24)
- E'. Eglon's "servants" discover him (25)
- D'. Ehud passes by "idols" at Seirah (26)
- C'. Ehud returns from Moab (27)
- B' Israel "smites" Moab (29)
- A'. Moab subdued by Israel (30)

The chiasm is a literary reflexive device which reverses the narrative plot at the hinge or turning point (letter H) of the drama. The Ehud narrative spirals downward to Eglon's death at the hand of God's servant which then turns the narrative upward to the deliverance of God's people from Moabite despotism to undisturbed liberty and peace in the Promised Land.

Is there a bracket chiasm around the whole narrative (3:12-30)?

Yes, the order of the Hebrew text is Israel (subdued) by Moab (v. 12); Moab (subdued by Israel (v. 30)

- A. Israel
- B. Moab



B'. Moab  
A'. Israel

**NB:** a framing device in precise order of reversal (vv. 12 and 30), bracketing the larger narrative drama of reversal—also in precise chiasmic style (vv. 13-29).

Again, what is the end in the beginning or protological-eschatological tandem here?

Ehud delivers his people by executing final judgment on the enemy scion. Jesus delivers his people by assuming the final judgment due them, thus destroying the power of their enemies.

Who is the next Judge?

Shamgar (3:31)

What is his significance?

He is the first of the minor Judges named in the book (see above)

What is unique about Shamgar?

His narrative is the shortest description of the six minor Judges

How ?

It is only one verse in the Hebrew text; other minor Judges receive two or more verses. But Shamgar receives special mention in the Song of Deborah and Barak (5:6)—a retrospective glance that no other minor Judge receives in the book.

”And the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord” (4:1). This verse (of the repetitive paradigm, noted above from chapter 2) brings us to Deborah and Barak.

What is their story?

They are the deliverers from the tyranny of Jabin, King in Hazor (4:2)

How do they deliver Israel?

By the military defeat of Jabin’s army under its commander, Sisera; and by destruction of Hazor under the commander of the army of the Lord, Barak.

What other element of this narrative is present in the text?

A poetic song of victory composed by Deborah and Barak (5)

How did Barak defeat Sisera?

By the word of the Lord through Deborah (4:6-7, 9, 14)

Where did the clash occur?

At Mt. Tabor near the Kishon River (use a good Bible atlas for the geography of this battle)

How does the Kishon River figure in this victory?

Cf. 4:7, 13 and 5:21. It seems that the Kishon “fought” against Jabin and Sisera by flooding the battle plain below Mt. Tabor and miring the iron chariots (4:3, 13; cf. 1:19) of the Canaanites in the mud. The enemy soldiers were stuck in the mud and thus easy victims of Barak’s 10,000 swords (cf. 5:22 which also suggests the chariot horses broke free by “dashing” away, leaving the charioteers vulnerable to the enemy Israelite infantry. For this explanation, cf. Ps. 83:9, 10).

In addition to the destruction of the Canaanite army, Israel also destroyed Jabin and Hazor (4:23-24).

Yes, recent archaeological excavations at Hazor have uncovered a destruction layer some date to the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (full discussion here: <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2011/01/06/The-Dating-of-Hazors-Destruction-in-Joshua-11-Via-Biblical-Archaeological-and-Epigraphical-Evidence.aspx> ). This could be the result of Deborah and Barak’s campaign to liberate Israel from Canaanite oppression.

Deborah with Barak are the instruments of Jabin’s destruction, even as Jael, wife of Heber, is the instrument of Sisera’s destruction (4:17-22).

What is the significance of the song of Deborah and Barak (5)?

It is a poetic rehearsal of redemptive history, past and present, even as it is a poetic narrative of the double victories (over Jabin’s army and Jabin’s army commander).

How is the poem constructed?

It begins with a title (v. 1) and ends with a doxology (v. 31). In between are three major subunits, each featuring narrative characterization: vv. 2-18 characterize the “people” of Israel (vv. 2, 18); vv. 19-23 characterize the drama of the battle with the Canaanites featuring those who “came” (v. 19) and those who did “not come” (v. 23); vv. 24-30 characterize Jael and Sisera’s mother, featuring the double “blessed” mother of Israel and the dolorous mother of Sisera—twice doubly deprived of the “spoil” of the people of God (v. 30). The doxology (31) contains double vectors—the downward vector of God’s enemies perishing and the upward spiral of the lovers of the Lord rising in his might. Doubling or duplicate patterns are central to this poem.

Expand on vv. 2-18.

The emphasis upon God’s theophanic majesty marching in powerful display at Sinai through the sojourn to Edom is a retrospective rehearsal of the *magnalia Dei* (vv. 3-5). Then the poetic narrative fast forwards to the redemptive-historical present—the days of Shamgar and Jael, also the days of Deborah and Barak (v. 12) in which the reversal of Israel’s misery and desolation (vv. 6, 8) was echoed by the marshalling cry of the gathering

troops from the tribes of Israel (vv. 9-18), especially Ephraim, Benjamin, Zebulun, Issachar, Reuben, Dan and Naphtali. Reversal reversed—from misery to victory.

Expand on vv. 19-23

Framed by those enemies who “came” and those allies who did not “come”, the poetic unit characterizes the participants in the victory of “the help of the Lord” (v. 23) in reverse contrast to those who did not participate—doubly “cursed”. These “no shows” are like the Canaanites—allies of the oppressor. This unit also reveals an appearance by the “angel of the Lord” (v. 23) who speaks an eschatological word of final judgment upon those who refused to “march on with strength” from heaven and heaven’s allies. Theophanic malediction even as theophanic benediction (the “torrent” of Kishon) enables the victory of heaven in and through its faithful servants.

Expand on vv. 24-30

This is a double characterization poem featuring the contrasting personalities of Jael, wife of Heber, and the unnamed Canaanite, mother of Sisera. The one is a “blessed” wife (?and perhaps mother); the other is a dolorous, bereft wife (and mother). The one is praised for her identification with the people of God, their victory and her own participation in vanquishing the foe. The other stares glassy-eyed at the horizon lamenting the vanquished general, son, leader of the enemies of God and his people. The only “spoils” which Sisera receives are defeat and death at the hands of two women—Jael and Deborah.

Summary: the patterns of reversal (as the reverse vectors of the concluding verse [5:31] of the narrative-poetic unit [chapters 4-5]) are replete. The reverse role of Deborah, a woman sovereignly and exceptionally exalted to leadership as prophetess of the Lord and judgess of Israel; Barak exalted from obscurity in Naphtali to leadership of the armed hosts of the Lord in victory over the oppressor of the people of God. The reversal of Jabin’s Canaanite tyranny in the stunning victory of the Lord God through Barak’s Israeli army of defeat. The reversal of Jael and Sisera’s mothers in the joyful triumph of the one in solidarity with the Lord God and his people and the sorrowful lament of the other in solidarity with forces of the lovers of oppression, tyranny and death, who are at the same time haters of peace, liberty and life for God and his people. There are eschatological vectors here, as the reader has learned from the unfolding organic pattern of the history of redemption. Barak is a possessor of eschatological faith (Heb 11:1, 30). That means, by faith in things “not seen”, he is joined to the not seen Lord God and his triumphant heavenly arena. The appearance of the “angel of the Lord” here in this narrative (5:23) is an anticipation of the appearance of the Son of God in time and space as victor over the enemies of God’s people (sin and death), while openly displaying his triumph over the allies of darkness and oppression via his glorious resurrection. The protology of this narrative—summed up in 5:31—is a semi-realization of the eschatology of this narrative in the person, work and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Barak’s (and Deborah’s) eschatological faith laid hold of this, embraced this, possessed this and acted courageously out of this. The Christic Angel of the Lord is explicitly active in the lives of his redeemed people in the OT—he is a vertical eschatological intrusion on the plane of horizontal redemptive-historical manifestation (cf. also Jdg 2:1, 4).

Where does the Angel of the Lord next appear?

In the narrative drama of the next Judge, Gideon (6:11ff.)

What oppressor has the paradigm of Israelite sin once again brought upon a disobedient and idolatrous people?

The Midianites attended by scarcity of food via plunder of flocks and herds with destruction of fields and granaries.

Who commissions Gideon to deliver Israel from the Midianite oppression?

The Angel of the Lord

Who is the Angel of the Lord?

He is “the Lord” (6:15, 22-24)

How does he assure Gideon of the commission he lays upon him?

With the Immanuel promise—“I will be with you” (6:16). This “God with you” pledge is the gracious assurance of the presence-union of the pre-incarnate Son of God.

But Gideon is an unlikely recipient of such grace, is he not?

Yes, he is a hesitant doubter (like many Christians) who needs constant reassurance and tokens of God’s promises.

And what of the Lord’s patience with Gideon?

He is longsuffering in his encouragement to weak Gideon in order that his omnipotent strength will be evident in so weak and fearful a vessel.

What is Gideon’s other name?

Jerubbaal (7:1)

Why?

Because he tore down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah (consort of Baal) (6:25-32).

How did he “deliver” (*moshia*) Israel?

With three hundred men, trumpets and pitchers (7:16)

Why only three hundred men?

In order that God’s mighty power would receive all the glory for the stunning victory (7:2)

How were the three hundred chosen?

By the way they drank water—lapping water from their hand rather than kneeling to place their face in the water, thus indicating the vigilance and wariness of the three hundred as opposed to the carelessness of the others (7:3-6).

Where is the irony here?

It was “into the hand” of those who drank from their “hands” that the Lord delivered the Midianites (7:9).

How did Gideon deliver via trumpets?

By sounding the noisy/blaring alarm in the dead of night so as to terrify and panic the enemy army.

How did he deliver by pitchers?

By smashing the clay vessels on the ground so as to emulate the din of a mighty marching army, thus causing the Midianite soldiers to kill one another in the confusion of noise and stampede of their camels and livestock.

How is the eschatological end present in this new beginning?

The people of God are delivered by the power of the Angel of the Lord and his in-dwelling Spirit, as the supernatural arena intersects with the historical. And it is that transcendent arena with its personalities and powers which possesses Gideon, drawing him in to its invisible and hoped for victory, grace and glory. The sword of the Lord and Gideon (7:20) anticipates the sword of the Lord and God’s Son (Rev 19:15). The incarnate Son of God is the fullness of this redemptive-historical drama at the “end of the age”.

After the disastrous career of Gideon’s son, Abimelech (chapter 9), we have two minor Judges, Tola (10:1-2) and Jair (10:3-5) who prepare the way for Jephthah.

**\*\*NB:** *with the reader’s indulgence, I depart here from the catechetical format I have used to this point in order to provide a more complete descriptive narrative account of the next two Judges—Jephthah and Samson. My hope is that in these expanded versions, the reader will detect the encapsulation of the “end in the beginning and the beginning in the end”.*

### **Jephthah, the Judge, Mirrors the Lord, the Judge**

Let us consider Jephthah, whose “faith possessed the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). The narrative of Jephthah’s life spans Judges 11 and 12, but it is the account in chapter 11 which stirs the controversy. The narrative parameters are established by the inclusio which frames Judges 11: Jephthah, the Gileadite (v. 1) and Jephthah, the Gileadite (v. 40). Included between these story-board bookends is a narrative of rejection and separation, a narrative of reconsideration and desperation, a narrative of proclamation and Spirit possession, a narrative of obligation and dedication. Jephthah’s story begins with his father; Jephthah’s story ends with him as father; Jephthah’s story in between beginning and end is the narrative of his union

with the Lord and his Holy Spirit. With this endowment, he delivers the people of God from the oppression of the sons of Ammon.

Jephthah is the son of a harlot—product of a union between Gilead his father and a prostitute. He is marked from birth with the stigma of illegitimacy. And with that stigma hanging over his head, Jephthah is driven from his home by his brothers—separated from his family and removed to a place outside the boundary of Israel. And in that place—the place set apart—Jephthah is set apart by God the Spirit—set apart with the companions of his removal—set apart to prepare himself for the service of the Lord. Jephthah, the servant of the Lord, removed into a far country and separated to the work of God, the plan of God, the salvation of the Lord. His nameless brothers are forgotten—unknown, unnamed; but Jephthah's name lives—lives among the roll call of the faithful—lives to be named again at the end of this story. The name of Jephthah unfolds the man in his story.

And the center of that story—the center of Jephthah's story—flows from his lips—flows from the testimony of his mouth: the Lord; the Lord, the God of Israel; the Lord our God; the Lord, the Judge. Jephthah testifies to the centrality of the Lord in his life. Over and over, the name that is most frequently on his lips is the Lord, the Lord, the Lord.

Jephthah's confession of the Lord's name includes his possession of the Lord's story. Jephthah understands, Jephthah rehearses, Jephthah lives out of the drama of the history of redemption. Jephthah knows the redemptive-historical story of his Lord—the Lord, his God. He knows the story of the exodus from Egypt—God's mighty hand of deliverance—deliverance from bondage; deliverance at the Reed Sea, deliverance in the wilderness, deliverance from the King of Moab, the King of Edom, the King of the Amorites. Jephthah knows the redemptive-historical story of the Lord's mighty conquest of Sihon and Balak, Transjordanian kings. And as Jephthah knows the story of the Lord his God, so he knows the brutal story of the god of the Ammonites (jointly worshipped with Moloch by Ammon and neighboring Moab, cf. 2 Kgs 3:27). Jephthah knows the brutal story of Chemosh (v. 24), blood-thirsty god of the Ammonites. Chemosh, who demanded the blood of little boys and girls; Chemosh, thirsting for the blood of little boys and little girls; Chemosh, who demands the blood of sons and daughters to be poured out on his altars—their bodies fully consumed in flames—their bloodied corpses engulfed in a holocaust of fire to appease the mute idol lusting for human burnt offerings. Yes, Jephthah knows the story of the god(s) of the nation he will defeat by the Spirit of the God of Israel. He knows that story and in his defeat of that human-sacrifice nation by the hand of the Lord, he declares his disgust, his contempt, his horror of their god and the burnt offerings of sons and daughters offered up to him—to Chemosh, god of human blood sacrifice.

And thus Jephthah vows a vow unto the Lord—unto the Lord who judges right and wrong, judges between sin and obedience. Jephthah vows to the Judge (v. 27) of all righteousness that he will devote to the Lord whatever first comes to him from his house if the Lord will bring him to his home—his family—to his child—to his daughter—to his legitimate offspring—to his seed marked with no stigma, no reproach, no slur of bastard outcast. Jephthah vows to the Lord—by the indwelling Holy Spirit of God, Jephthah vows to the Lord that what first greets him in peace from

his home “shall be the Lord’s”. It shall be devoted to the Lord, separated to the Lord, set apart to the Lord. If I come to my house in peace, what first greets me will belong to the Lord. I will part with it; I will dedicate it; I will devote it to the service of the Lord.

Jephthah, this pilgrim from a far country, this exile come again to the Promised Land, vows before the face of heaven, in the Holy Spirit—vows a heaven-oriented vow—vows to devote to heaven what greets him in peace. Whatever it is, he will commend it to heaven, devote it entirely and wholly to the Lord God of heaven, the Lord God of Moses and Israel, the Lord God of the law of offerings and sacrifice, the Lord God of the pilgrims of the former age who says, “There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire . . . a thing I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter my mind” (Dt 18:10; Jer 7:31; 19:5). Jephthah knows the antitheses between the sacrificial law of the Lord his God and the sacrificial law of Chemosh, a god of the Ammonites. Jephthah knows, and when he comes to his home in peace, before the face of heaven, he cannot, no he cannot become the pagan Ammonite and kill his daughter and burn her up on an altar of the very Lord God whom he has served—the God who has declared that such an offering would be an abomination in his sight and make Jephthah possess the spirit of Satan, not the Spirit of the Lord his God.

It is the heaven-oriented nature of Jephthah’s faith—of Jephthah’s life—which possesses his vow as heaven possesses his faith as heaven possesses his heart. And heaven moves him to devotion, not immolation. The substance of things hoped for—heavenly riches and possession moves Jephthah to devote his daughter to heaven. As his life by the Spirit of the living Lord God is devoted to heaven, so he devotes the life of his only child—his one and only child—his beloved daughter—her life is devoted to heaven as his is. Jephthah mirrors the life of his daughter in his own life. This father and child are not the stigmatized paradigm of the beginning of the story; this father and child are marked with the Spirit of devotion to heaven and to heaven’s Lord. If Jephthah is filled with the Holy Spirit, he vows to mirror himself in his daughter—to devote her to a life in the Spirit—a celibate life in the Spirit—a life in which as an unmarried woman, a virgin, she “will be concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit” (1 Cor 7:34). And the daughter of Jephthah replies, “My father, you have given your word to the Lord; do to me as you have said” (Jdg 11:36). Jephthah’s daughter accepts the vow of her father, mirroring/reflecting herself in him; in his Lord; in the Holy Spirit that in-dwells him; in the heaven-oriented focus of his life; in his devotion to heaven and heaven’s Lord. Now, she will devote herself to heaven and heaven’s Lord. She will devote herself singularly, celibately, solely to the Lord. No children for her; no husband for her; no legitimate seed from her to perpetuate the line of Jephthah and family. Though she bewails her virgin status, she embraces its perpetuity, not its bloody execution. She will join the women who serve the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of Israel—women mentioned in Exodus 38:8 and 1 Samuel 2:22. Jephthah’s daughter is wholly dedicated to the service of God—a perpetual virgin serving at the door of the tabernacle of the Lord—the tabernacle of the Lord, the gateway to heaven and the most holy of holies presence of the God of salvation.

“She knew not a man” (Jdg 11:39)—an irrelevant remark if she was killed and burned on an altar. “She knew not a man”—a very relevant remark if she remained unmarried, a virgin for life who

served God until her death. For if Jephthah did in fact murder his daughter (as all romantics and liberals assert), the daughters of Israel would not go about for four days in the year to “recount” or “praise” the fact (11:40). No, if he murdered her, you would want to forget it, not memorialize it. But if she lived a perpetual virgin, you would commemorate her self-sacrifice, even her devotion, and praise God for the life of service she rendered to heaven and heaven’s Lord. She thus becomes a testimony to the substance of the life of heaven—there, they are neither married nor given in marriage (Mt 22:30). Jephthah’s vow projects the substantial and evidential hope of a heavenly devotion, a heavenly service at the door of a heavenly tabernacle where all pilgrims by faith will rest and bask in full and complete devotion to heaven’s Lord through heaven’s Son by heaven’s Holy Spirit. Jephthah and his daughter possessed that by faith for Jephthah rejoiced to see Christ’s day; and he saw it and was glad.

### **Samson: The End is the Beginning**

Out of the eater came something to eat;  
And out of the strong came something sweet.

With this clever riddle, Samson inaugurates his wedding feast with the unnamed Philistine woman of Timnah (Jdg 14:4). How suggestive is this riddle! For in a real sense, this rhyme is an interpretation of the man. Samson himself is a riddle.

Raised a Nazarite—set apart as God’s own from his mother’s womb—Samson is in fact a weakling—a notorious, tragic weakling. He tears a lion with his bare hands; smites the Philistines hip and thigh with no more than a donkey’s jawbone; picks up the front gates of the city of Gaza and deposits them opposite Mt. Hebron—Hebron, mind you was 36 miles away and an ascent from sea level to 3200 feet above the Mediterranean. By conservative estimates, the gates of Gaza weighed 2 ½ tons. 5000 pounds carried 36 miles climbing 3200 feet!

Yet this reservoir of physical strength is the 90 pound weakling as he sleeps on Delilah’s knees. Samson, charismatic delivered appointed to emancipate Israel from Philistine tyranny and oppression—Samson dallies with the gift of God as he dallies with Delilah. Samson—more likely a candidate for arrest and censure by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals than a champion of Israel. You will recall the story in Judges 15; how he tied the tails of 300 foxes together in pairs, put a troch between the tails, lit the torch and sent the foxes running through the Philistine grain fields. Samson, designated to live as a temple of the Holy Spirit—Samson dies at his own hand. Samson—some of whose exploits are downright embarrassing to the church—Samson finds a niche in the roll call of the faithful in Hebrews 11. “Samson . . . who by faith . . . shut the mouths of lions . . . from weakness was made strong . . . put foreign armies to flight . . . experienced mockings and scourgings, yes also chains and imprisonment . . . having gained approval through [his] faith.”

The riddle of Samson is the enigma of a glorious birth and destiny, matched by a dubious and often ignominious career. Oh! What he could have been! Alas! What he became!!

Samson has been a riddle to interpreters and commentators of the OT since the days of the early church fathers. They have increased the riddle of this mighty man of the tribe of Dan by



allegorizing him, moralizing him, typologizing him. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Samson has been dismissed as a mythological hero—a Jewish Titan—a Kosher Hercules.

Perhaps the most gifted literary mind in the history of the church to wrestle with Samson was the English poet, John Milton. In his epic drama entitled “Samson Agonistes”, Milton recreates the life of Samson by means of dialogue. This dialogue is a psychological and spiritual drama—hence Milton’s title “Samson Agonistes”—Samson the Wrestler—whose chief opponent is himself. Milton takes us inside the mind and heart of the blind Samson where “restless thoughts . . . like a deadly swarm of hornets . . . present times past, what once I was, and what am now.” The Milton who brilliantly crafts the Samson Agonistes is the same Milton who penned the magnificent description of Satan plummeting from heaven to hell in “Paradise Lost”. “Him the Almighty Power Hurl’d headlong from the Ethereal Sky with hideous ruin and combustion down to bottomless perdition, there to dwell in Adamantine Chains and Penal fire. Who durst defy the Omnipotent to Arms.”

And what of Milton’s own agony, his own blindness, out of which he dictated his most famous sonnet: “When I consider how my light is spent . . . And doth God exact day-labor, light denied? . . . They also serve who only stand and wait.” Lovely, poignant lines from a blind poet. So in Samson, Milton found a kindred soul.

Students of English literature have not missed the autobiographical similarities in Milton’s Samson. Samson was blind; so was Milton. Samson was the object of humiliating defeat (Jdg 16); so was Milton humiliated in the collapse of the English Puritan Revolution in 1660. Samson is a witness to Philistine revelry; the “Philistines” in England after the Restoration of Charles II were the divine-right monarchists and the episcopalian bishops. The similarities between the biblical Samson and the Puritan Milton are intriguing—but the riddle of John Milton is not my concern. It is the dramatic contrast in Samson which Milton so brilliantly draws out so as to shed light on the biblical text which is my concern.

Milton’s drama is set in the prison house of Gaza (Jdg 16:21ff.). It is the day before Samson’s death. Samson’s story is drawn out through dialogue with his visitors. His father, Manoah; Delilah, whom Milton gratuitously makes Samson’s wife; and Harapha, a Philistine Goliath before his time, whom Milton adds to the story as a foil of brute strength. Samson’s opening speech is a summary of his own contradictory state: “Why was my breeding order’d and prescrib’d as of a person separate to God, design’d for great exploits: if I must die betray’d, captive and both my eyes put out, made of my enemies the scorn and gaze, to grind in brazen fetters. Ask for this great deliverer now and find him eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves, himself in bonds under Philistine yoke.”

However, the depth of Samson’s humiliation is not yet. A feast to Dagon is proclaimed. The Philistines gather to praise their blind, deaf and dumb god, Dagon—to celebrate the deliverance of Samson into their hands. Mighty Dagon, they shout, has delivered this weakling—this blind weakling into our hands. And so they drag Samson out to make sport of him. Sightless Samson is the spectacle. The once mighty champion of Israel must be led by the hand to rest himself on the supporting pillars. But every covenant child knows what blind Samson did once he got his hands on those pillars. Samson turned those sightless eyes to heaven—away from himself—away from

his weakened condition—away from his humiliation. Samson turned his countenance to the all-seeing God and prayed with sighs and groans—prayed with all his heart—prayed for God to vindicate him. And having cried out to the Lord with a loud voice, he laid his hands upon those pillars—he stretched out his arms upon those pillars and bowed himself with strength he had never before sensed; and Samson pushed and pressed with all his might so that those two pillars heaved and buckled—and down came the pillars, down came the temple of Dagon, down came the lords and ladies of the Philistines, down they all came to death and destruction.

Here is the solution to the riddle of Samson. The end of the Samson saga is the beginning. Milton puts it perfectly: “Samson hath quit himself like Samson.” At the end, Samson is Samson—finally like the Samson he was meant to be—finally a Samson whose strength is in the Lord—finally a Samson who out of humiliation is made strong in almighty grace. The rubble of the pagan temple testifies that Samson is a riddle no more. From this broken carcass flows a sweetness richer than the honeycomb. For in the end, Samson finds union with God. The Lord God whom he had been dedicated to serve does not leave him nor forsake him. By faith, Samson in the end from weakness was made strong.

It is the end of the Samson saga which reveals the riches of God’s grace. For in the dying Samson, God reveals himself as the vindicator of the man of faith. “The just by faith shall live.” Samson believed God at last and Samson lives—lives *coram Deo*—before the face of God. In the end is the beginning; in the dying Samson, God shows himself the destroyer of his enemies. Would Dagon be praised with Samson in chains; Samson unchained delivers the capital blow to Dagon and his seed. Would a temple of Dagon, be raised up; in the destruction of the temple of Dagon, a greater temple is revealed—the temple of the Lord in the heart of his servant. In the end, God dwells within the heart of Samson and God graciously makes that heart his very own dwelling place. Samson finds God his Immanuel at last—God with him. Would the Philistines vaunt their power over God’s servant in mock humiliation and scorn; Samson through the in-dwelling power of God pulls down the dwelling of the principalities and powers of that present evil age. The drama of the saga of Samson is that the end of his life is the reversal of his whole ignominious career. The end of the life of Samson is nothing less than a resurrection—a resurrection of faith, vindication and victory.

This is no suicide. The great Christian commentators down through the ages are right. Samson’s death is a holy war—like the Conquest of Canaan under Joshua, Samson is the Lord’s instrument of *herem*—devoting the Philistines to destruction. His own life is forfeit in the battle just as every soldier renders his life potentially forfeit in battle. Milton expresses it thus: “Come, come, no time for lamentation now. Samson hath quit himself like Samson and heroically hath finish’d a life heroic on his enemies fully revenged. Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt, dispraise or blame, nothing but well and fair, and what may quiet us in a death so noble.”

And yet the noble end of Samson directs our eyes to yet another end. The new beginning which is made in Samson’s resurrection points the eye of faith to a greater resurrection in the end of the

age. Samson's birth was announced by an angelic messenger; so was the birth of Samson's Lord. Samson's growth and development was blessed by God; so was the growth of Samson's Lord. Samson was moved by the power of the Holy Spirit; so was Samson's Lord. Samson entered the stronghold of the enemy to become a spectacle of mockery and humiliation; so did Samson's Lord. Still, Samson is not just a protological Christ-figure. He is a testimony to the reality that the end is more glorious than the beginning—the end eschatologically and the end chronologically. The verdict of Scripture with respect to Samson is not a preachy indictment of his depravity—those weaknesses are obvious enough without exposition. The verdict of Scripture with respect to Samson is the testimony that he possessed the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb 11:1). The substance of things hoped for in Samson's case is vindication and victory. The evidence of things not seen in Samson's case is life for God's servant out of his death in the arena of his enemies.

The summary verdict of Hebrews 11 with respect to Samson is that he possessed faith: “By faith, Samson . . .” Now the faith Samson possessed was faith in a particular aspect of trust—not faith forensically conceived (as in justifying faith); not faith mystically conceived (as in sanctifying faith); but faith in its eschatological aspect. Faith as the vehicle of the world not seen unleashed in the human heart. By faith, Samson saw! Yes, blind Samson saw!! By faith, Samson saw the end from the beginning; Samson by faith saw the fulfillment of the promise of the covenant of grace. By faith, Samson saw his life united with the life of One who would deliver without being a sinner—One who would redeem without being a failure—One who lead captivity captive. In the end, by faith, Samson saw his life hidden with God—and that is why his prayer of faith was the vehicle for unleashing supernatural power upon the principalities and powers of his evil age.

So in Samson, we—upon whom the end of the ages has come—we behold the end from the beginning and the beginning in the end. A greater than Samson has pulled down the synagogue of Satan, despoiling principalities and powers and the rulers of darkness. A greater than Samson has been crucified in weakness, raised again in power. A greater than Samson has built the true temple dwelling of God on the rubble of idol shrines—for he is the temple, he is Immanuel—he is God with us.

Here is where your faith and my faith must find their end. With Samson at last, in all of our foolishness, all of our sinfulness, all of our arrogance, cleverness and pride—not the blind eye, but the inner eye of Samson's faith—the faith that looks steadfastly unto Jesus.

Who was delivered up unto death  
Who was raised up unto life  
Who redeems life in the pit  
(even the prison pit at Gaza!)

Your faith sees this glorious end in Christ Jesus. Your faith sees what he did on the cross—what he did on the third day—your faith sees his death and resurrection—and in that end is your beginning, the beginning in you, as it was in Samson, of an endless life.

By faith, Samson saw Christ's day and he rejoiced and was glad.

*Resuming once again the catechetical format as we leave behind the sermonic format.*

How does the book of Judges end?

With the story of the idolatrous Micah and the lecherous Levite

How is this narrative framed?

At its inception (17:6) and conclusion (21:25) with the duplicate statement: “in those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.”

How is this larger five-chapter unit divided?

Into two subunits: the tale of Micah (17-18) and the tale of the Levite and his concubine (19-21)

But a Levite appears in the Micah narrative?

Yes, in 17:7ff as evidence of narrative interface between the two distinct characters

What is the character of Micah and the Levite?

They are indicative of the base depravity and apostasy which is the recurring theme of the “evil Israel did in the sight of the Lord” throughout the 300 years of the Judges.

What is found in chapter 18?

An expansion on Micah’s narrative in which his “graven image” is the focus

What is found in chapter 19?

An expansion on a Levite’s narrative in which his “concubine” is the focus

What is found in chapters 20-21?

The horrific tale of the Levite’s concubine, her gang rape, death and dismemberment, all of which precipitates a civil war between Benjamites and Danites, the two prominent tribes in the hospitality of Micah (Danites) and the hospitality of the Benjamites (the Levite).

What was the result of this ominous hospitality?

The near annihilation of the tribe of Benjamin by the tribe of Dan and their allies in the north (“sons of Israel”)

How was a remnant of Benjamin preserved?

By the sorrow of the “sons of Israel” in nearly wiping out the whole tribe of Benjamin (21:3). The remnant of Benjamin was given wives from the remnant of Jabesh-gilead (21:12, 21) in order to preserve the Benjamite tribe and inheritance.

Where is the end in the beginning and the beginning in the end of this ugly story?

Sin is ugly and it results in death and the curse—even the sin of idolatry and the sin of harlotry. The horizontal beginnings and ends are clear.

But what of the vertical vector in this depraved tragedy?

The eschatological aspect is the divine withdrawal or “giving them up” to their respective lusts, etc. in order that the normal product of sin may be evident and rampant. The curse of sin and depravity brings the eschatological finality of death and destruction (eschatological judgment intrudes into historical time and space).

Where is Christ in all this ugliness?

He is desperately needed as the faithful High Priest who serves no pagan idol cult, but is devoted to the Lord God alone. He is desperately needed as the sovereign preserver of a gracious remnant, even when they appear to be perched on the brim of annihilation. He is the gracious Savior of all those who “cry to the Lord” in distress, out of oppression because of cursed sin’s ugly/wretched depravity. He hears their cry from heaven and incarnates himself to save them from all their sins and depravity.

How do we view the era of the Judges in the organic continuum of the unfolding history of redemption?

It is an era in God’s unfolding organic plan of redemption which is impermanent, not lasting, not eternal—an era which would disappear with the better era to follow, i.e., the era of the monarchy (especially the Davidic-Solomonic monarchy). The broader shift from the age of the Patriarchs to the age of Moses to the age of the Judges to the age of the Monarchs is a testimony to the succession of better eras in the history of redemption—better successive revelations of the covenant of grace in history—grace of God to the patriarchs, more richly declared in God’s grace to enslaved sons and daughters of the patriarchs; age of Mosaic exodus richer by far than the age of the Patriarchs (grace upon grace). And the age of the Judges was an age richer by far than the age of Moses for it is universally regarded by the Judges themselves as the fruition of the Mosaic exodus and sojourn (settlement in the Promised Land was far better than wandering in the wilderness for forty years). And the age of the Monarchy was even richer than the age of the Judges with a king after God’s own heart uniting all Israel as the shepherd of God’s flock, championing God’s people against her enemies, extending the scepter of his kingdom over the Gentile nations round about him.

The Patriarchal age was not eternal, not permanent—it was to be surpassed. It was a transition in the history of redemption between the scattering of the nations at Babel and gathering of one from the nations as the friend of God (2 Chr 20:7; Is 41:8; Jam 2:23). And the Mosaic age was not eternal, not permanent—it was to be surpassed. It was a transition in the history of redemption between patriarchal descent into Egypt and Mosaic theocracy. And the Mosaic theocracy was not eternal, not permanent—it was to be surpassed. It was a transition in the history of redemption between exodus salvation and promised land settlement. And the days of the Judges were not eternal, not permanent—they were to be

surpassed. They were a transition between Mosaic theocracy and Davidic monarchy. None of these eras was intended by God in the history of redemption to be the absolute, the final, the abiding era in redemptive history. Each of these eras in redemptive history was provisional, transitional, impermanent, displaced and replaced by a better era coming after them. And the goal—the ultimate, permanent, abiding goal of each of these eras in the history of redemptive—the patriarchal era, the Mosaic era, the era of the Judges, the monarchical era—the goal, the end, the permanent and abiding transition of each of these eras is the kingdom of heaven which dawns with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, son of David, son of the ‘savior’ judges, son of the Mosaic exodus, son of the patriarchs.

No eternal age in the age of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; no eternal age in the age of Moses; no eternal age in the age of Joshua and Judges; no eternal age in the age of David. The only eternal age arrives with the Son of God who arrives from eternity bringing with him the eternal kingdom of heaven in word and deed and power.

**A Review of Robert Jewett on Romans<sup>1</sup>**  
**Part 3: Romans 13-16<sup>2</sup>**

Scott F. Sanborn

Since we have already delineated Jewett’s flat eschatology in the first two parts of our book review on his Romans commentary, we will not lay this out again in great detail. Instead, our rehearsal of Jewett’s comments on the text will be more random in nature, commenting on points that seemed interesting to us or which seem to require special attention. However, Jewett clearly continues his flat eschatological program in these chapters as he focuses on the horizontal, to the relative neglect of its grounding in the vertical transcendent kingdom of God, now semi-realized. Thus, in chapter 13, he focuses on our horizontal relationship to the state; in chapter 14, on horizontal relationships within the church; in chapter 15, on the horizontal nature of redemptive history and the mission of Paul; and in chapter 16, on horizontal relationships within the church once again.

In response to this primarily horizontal focus, our own exposition of these chapters will seek to unveil their necessary connection to the greater manifestation of God’s righteousness as it has now occurred in Christ. This semi-eschatological fulfillment implies that the present manifestation of the kingdom of God is transcendent in relative contrast to the Jewish economy in which God’s kingdom was partially shadowed forth in an earthly arena. In this way, our own exposition of Romans 14-16 will serve as our primary response to Jewett’s flat eschatology and overall approach to these chapters. Still, more can be said than we will say on the transcendent nature of the kingdom and its relationship to the life of the church in light of the revelation of the righteousness of God. This is the revelation of the righteousness of God in the arena of heaven— of peace and joy in Christ before his heavenly throne and this is to jointly express itself in the life of the church who are all raised with him in heavenly places. It is this already of the kingdom in the Spirit in union with Christ that gives us the hope for its fullest manifestation in the age to come. This should be kept in mind as we will focus more on how these chapters are connected to the semi-eschatological fulfillment of the prophets in the greater manifestation of the righteousness of God that has now occurred in redemptive history. For the reader and preacher of these chapters, this understanding of this historical manifestation must always be connected to the transcendent life of heaven before God in Christ, whose heavenly glory—righteousness, peace, liberty and joy—have been more fully manifested “now” in Christ.

Also, because of the space needed for this argument, we will not deal in detail with Romans 13. While our review of Jewett ends with this issue, God willing, we will write a separate article on Romans 13 later, showing the implications of manifestation of the righteousness of God for its exposition. In addition, because of the more detailed approach needed to argue our point in these

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006. 1140pp. Cloth. ISBN: 978-0-8006-6084-0. \$90.00.

<sup>2</sup>This third part is a continuation of Scott F. Sanborn, *A Review of Robert Jewett on Romans, Part 1: Romans 1-8*, K:JNWTS 29/3 (Dec 2014):17-42 (<http://kerux.com/doc/2903A6.asp>) and Scott F. Sanborn, *A Review of Robert Jewett on Romans, Part 2: Romans 9-12*, K:JNWTS 30/3 (Dec 2015):24-43 (<http://kerux.com/doc/3003A4.asp>).

chapters, we will begin our exposition in Romans 15, and show how these insights reflect back on chapter 14, finally concluding with the latter half of Romans 15 and with Romans 16. As a result, we will need to put our own argument for the interpretation of all these chapters together. Thus, we will present chosen points from Jewett's commentary first, one chapter after another (Romans 13, 14, 15, 16), followed by our own interpretation of Romans 14-16. We begin below with some of Jewett's points.

### **Jewett on Romans 13**

Jewett presents some interesting historical background to this chapter in light of the Roman context. In that context, Romans 13 suggests that Paul is not in favor of various forms of political dissidents. Paul assures the members of the Roman church that are in the Roman government that his mission to Spain is not to be a disruption of their government. According to Jewett, Romans 13 contrasts Paul's view of government to the Roman view. It is God (not Jupiter or Saturn) that has power in the state and establishes the state. Thus, Paul does not have a redemptive view of the state (the messianic Roman view). Paul's state is non-redemptive. Also, Rome does not receive power because of her unique virtue, but by God's appointment. However, Jewett claims that Roman Christians would have only been concerned about the state of their own time, not that of Christians off into the distant future. Thus, Romans 13 does not deal with that. Jewett suggests the following historical context: "By conversing with a fearful believer with a different profile than conversation partners and interlocutors earlier in the letter, Paul appeals to congregations with close ties to the government that harbored concerns that his project would entail public disturbances like those in his earlier career" (793) in Acts (that they would have heard about, 2 Cor. 6:5; 11:25). Paul tells fearful Christians how to avoid confrontation with the authorities. He also wants the assistance of Christians in public office for his mission to Spain. In this, Jewett thinks Paul does not rightly assess the evil potentials of the government—the later Neronian persecutions.

Without accepting this last statement, it is possible to consider Jewett's suggestions for the historical context while nonetheless arguing that Paul's discussion of the state has continuing validity for the church and state today. Since we will argue that the greater manifestation of the righteousness of God (which is significant for the entire semi-eschatological period) provides the context for Romans 13, we believe Paul's statements about the civil authorities continue in force today. We live in the same redemptive-historical period as Paul with respect to our relationship to the state.

Jewett lays out some other interesting historical background. The Spanish paid tributary taxes. Paul's mission has nothing to do with a tax revolt. This would be reassuring to churches containing Roman officials.

### **Jewett on Romans 14**

Again, Jewett has some interesting historical background for Romans 14 as he points out the context to some of the distinctions between clean and unclean. Commenting on Paul's concern of sinning against the brother and causing the brother to perish for whom Christ died, Jewett says that the verb used is a present imperative, which implies an on-going process rather than a once and for all being lost before God. Of course, Jewett is a Universalist.



The “weak” eat only kosher food. Here Paul is talking about food eaten at a love feast, according to Jewett. Paul also uses a present rather than aorist imperative when he speaks of destroying the weak. Thus, Paul is speaking of a sustained continuous action of ruining someone, that is, to continue to ruin them. Therefore, the idea of eschatological ruin overlooks the tense of the verb and the present effects of violation of conscience. The implication of this is that immortality equals destruction. But does Paul really use it in this way?

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of...” is used to connect this with previous verses. The kingdom of God is not an unimportant theme in Paul as some assume. The use of a formal thesis in this verse and its similarity to 1 Corinthians 4:20 shows its importance. The kingdom of God is the church realm where Christ reigns, manifesting salvation in the form of the righteousness of God. However, Jewett does not point out that the kingdom is the fruition of the previous chapters—think of chapter 10 “our God reigns”. Jewett also misses the broader context when he notes that Paul is countering the superiority claims among the individuals in the church, but he does not point out that this is a result of the mercies of God (chapters 1-11).

For Jewett, the background to not eating meat should consider the following: in Rome, pork was the most usual meat consumed by the poor, often distributed at religious festivals. Since the weak eat only kosher food and little meat was available besides unclean pork, they generally ate only vegetables. Jewett is suggesting a background here in which the phrase “eats only vegetables” does not imply that Paul is dealing with meat sacrificed to idols, as in 1 Corinthians 10. On the other hand, Jewett suggests that Daniel’s not eating meat was an ascetic practice, based on eschatological dualism (Daniel 10:3; 1:10-16). We think it more likely that the unclean meat (unclean according to the Mosaic law) in Babylon accounted for Daniel’s demur. Paul identifies with both the weak and the strong. For Jewett, the weak can now act independently, not just the powerful.

Jewett also claims that the up-building of the church is corporate, not individual. But we ask how can one build up the corporate apart from building up the individuals that make up the corporate group?

### **Jewett on Romans 15**

For Jewett, when Paul quotes the OT in Romans 15, he is bringing Scripture to bear on the present situation irrespective of its original meaning in the OT. We strongly disagree. While we will not deal with the passages quoted in Romans 15:9-12 in their context (for the sake of space), in giving our own understanding of Romans 14-15 below, we will suggest how other OT passages quoted by Paul in Romans shed light on his message. We believe a comparable evaluation of the passages Paul quotes in Romans 15:9-12 yields similar fruit.

In commenting on Paul’s statement “that we might have hope,” Jewett suggests that this is the hope in the conversion of the nations—that they may all be saved at the eschaton. But we ask is this not primarily eschatological even if the conversion of the nations may be in anticipation of the eschatological future? On Romans 15:7-13 (“confirm the truth of God”), Jewett shows how many of its themes (truth, promises, faith, etc.) go back earlier in the letter. Here Paul quotes passages from all three divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures. He uses paronomasia to fuse the pericope of peace together. The glory of God goes back to the previous pericope (9a and 9b). Hope also goes back to the previous pericope. These carefully crafted rhetorical devices give it effective eloquence.

Jewett thinks welcoming one another refers to the weak and strong welcoming one another and doing so in the sacramental love feasts. Jewett also states that when Paul says Christ accepted you, he accepted you as his enemies—an echo of the earlier part of the letter. This seems like an interesting insight in lieu of God’s mercy—the theme found throughout this book (as seen in Rom. 12:1).

There is no instance of a double meaning in classical Greek and biblical parallels. Thus Jewett says that truth does not equal faithfulness as others claim. We believe this is true, but it is more than that. In the book of Romans, a biblical parallel includes a richness of meaning. But Jewett claims truth cannot have more than one connotation and opts for “establish” saying that the Spanish mission will establish the promises of God to Gentiles. Still, Jewett has at least two meanings—establish and Gentiles.

We think the truth of God has several connotations that intersect. Truth is primarily eschatological. Romans 1 associates truth with eternal life. It includes God’s faithfulness to his promises to bring the eschatological salvation (now semi-realized), one in which there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Thus, it confirms God’s promises made to the fathers—salvation to the nations, as Abraham was promised the world (Rom. 4:13).

Jewett claims that the Christological interpretation of Psalm 18:49 (“I will praise you among the Gentiles”) is not convincing. He gives the following reasons: First, Christ was in the third person, but now we have the first person used. Second, Christ did not preach to the Gentiles during his lifetime.

Thus, Jewett concludes that “I” is the Christian evangelist (Paul), the same “I” of Romans 15:8-9. We believe Jewett has missed the richness of Paul’s identity with Christ here. The “I” here is Paul in union with Christ—Christ who preaches the gospel to the nations in his resurrection (possibly implied in Rom. 10). One may ask, do we see a similarity here to what Geerhardus Vos discusses in the “Eschatology of the Psalter” (Appendix to *The Pauline Eschatology*) describing the way in which David projects himself into the eschatological future when he calls all nations to come? In this Psalm, Paul identifies himself with the resurrected Christ to come who will call all nations to himself from heaven. And Paul himself thinks of Christ preaching to the Gentiles in 1 Timothy 3:16 (preached among the Gentiles, raised into glory).

Jewett is right to point out that the shoot of David as Messiah is not a form of despotism (we might say Jewish or otherwise) since it refers back to Christ as “servant”. Thus, the Gentiles will hope in him (as we see it, not simply fear him with a servile fear). Jewett rightly points out that this could only happen (i.e., hope for the Gentiles and the Spanish mission) if Paul’s message is one stripped of Jewish political messianism.

According to Jewett, the kingdom of God joins the church with the whole creation (Rom. 8:25) and joins the church’s liturgies with angelic creatures who rejoice and praise around the throne of God, which involves heavenly peace. This seems like a good note, but what does Jewett mean by it? We think Paul has a heavenly orientation to worship, but one that is semi-eschatological and invisible, not one involving liturgies associated with visible glory in worship. We also take issue with Jewett’s association of the kingdom with this creation, insofar as he seems to view the kingdom as a bare restitution of the first pristine creation, now universalized. Our arguments later

on the justification of God's name in redemptive history imply the transcendent nature of the kingdom.

Jewett has some interesting suggestions as to how Romans 15 reverses Romans 1, as noted in several contrasting phrases. For instance, "full of goodness" reverses "full of envy, murder and strife" (Rom. 1:29). Also, "filled with every kind of knowledge" reverses filled with every manner of evil, greed, etc. (Rom. 1:29). (Jewett also suggested something else is reversed here, i. e., the hierarchical elements of the Greco-Roman world.) This we find interesting, since we do believe that the worship of the Gentiles in Romans 15:8-13 is a reversal of their idolatry in Romans 1:18-32, as we will spell out later.

When Paul says he has a priestly function, Jewett says this is not a recollection of institutional priests. Instead, it accords with Romans 13:6, referring to a public functionary of the city, who provides remuneration without a particular role. Gentiles once in the distance are now brought near to a sacrifice, the priestly offering reminding us of Romans 12:1, the sacrifice acceptable to God

Jewett is right to point out that the "Spirit" is he in whom the exalted Lord is present. Also for Jewett, signs and wonders indicate that Paul is in continuity with the first Exodus. We would add that signs and wonders among the nations authenticate the semi-eschatological age, for Paul is an ambassador to the nations during the semi-eschatological time.

Jewett does some interesting things with geography in this chapter. He uses ancient maps to elucidate Paul's statement "from Jerusalem to Illyricum". Illyricum is on a circle from Jerusalem. The arc encircles the world. In Jerusalem, Paul shared his message (Acts 15). Jewett suggests that Paul was in Illyricum for two months in the summer and fall of 56 A.D. This was after meeting with Titus who is associated with Dalmatia in Illyricum (2 Tim. 4:10) and just before his final winter in Corinth where Romans was written.

What were Paul's hindrances (v. 22)? Jewett suggests that they were several imprisonments and his troubles in the churches (Philemon 14). Paul postponed plans to deliver the Jerusalem offering. He had extensive travel plans such as an abortive trip to Corinth and an anxious trip to Troas to find Titus concerning the Corinthian church. Jewett interestingly connects Paul's hope to go to Spain with his desire to preach the gospel to the uttermost ends of the earth. To substantiate this, he points out that Spain (the Straits of Gibraltar) was considered the ends of the world in the Roman Mediterranean cultures of the time. "Send on my way" (v. 24) is also almost a technical term for provisioning someone at least part of the way on a trip.

We also find Tartessos (Jewett calls this "Tarshish", p. 924), near the Straits of Gibraltar, associated with the ends of the earth. The association of Tarshish near the Straits of Gibraltar with the ends of the earth is also found in Psalm 71:8, 10 in the LXX (72:8, 10, English). "From Euphrates to the end of the earth may kings of Tarshish and the isles give him gifts." Tarshish is also found in Isaiah 66:19 (cf. "offering of the Gentiles", Rom. 15:16).

Jewett presents an interesting reconstruction of Paul's travel plans with the Jerusalem offering, claiming that Paul only had the Macedonian funds when he wrote Romans. For Paul was still waiting for the Achaean funds, which had already been collected. Sometimes one gets the impression that Jewett attributes to Paul almost a post-millennial fervor (which we deny, for this would not fit with the apostle's view of the already and not yet manifestation of the righteousness of God).

According to Jewett, in Romans 15:13 we find the final proof of such a post-millennial (our words, not Jewett's) fervor. The theme he gives this is the conversion of the whole world. For Jewett, Paul's hopes for the Jerusalem offering, visit to Rome, and subsequent mission to Spain remain unfulfilled. However, this is questionable. Though Paul may have been hindered for a time in coming to Spain through his imprisonment in Jerusalem and in Rome, there is every reason to believe that he later made his trip to Spain, returning to the Aegean afterwards—perhaps during the crisis of the church during Nero's persecution. It is at this time that he was beheaded, according to tradition.

As for the term “the God of peace” (16:20), Jewett makes this horizontal only, referring back to Romans 1:6-7 and suggesting that it is simply peace among all believers. While we agree that there is a horizontal element of this peace that has to do with peace among the brethren (Jew and Gentile alike), we think that this once again is centered in the vertical relationship of the people of God to the transcendent kingdom of Christ. As we noted in our previous reviews of Jewett, we believe the transcendent provides the ground and necessity for the horizontal. We are not simply left to the horizontal, as in Jewett's interpretation of Romans. This vertical relationship of peace that we are suggesting in “the God of peace” is further substantiated in Romans 5—we have peace with God. This is vertical primarily and is part and parcel of an eschatological triumph in Christ, now semi-realized. As a result of this, there is peace among those in Christ Jesus, in his church—a peace that brings union between Jew and Gentile alike. Thus, with Paul's semi-eschatological teaching of the justification of God in redemptive history in Christ Jesus and the justification of his people in him now (fully manifested at this time), God has brought about a new peace between Jews and Gentiles in Christ Jesus. (We will expand on this further in our comments on the text below.)

### **Jewett on Romans 16**

Jewett views Romans 16 as the peroratio. In this we believe he is correct. He also rightly points out that Phoebe is described as a “patroness”. According to Jewett, she alone is the patroness of the Spanish mission. As a result, the churches of Rome are not financially burdened. Instead, according to Jewett, the church is to help Phoebe with logistics and translators necessary for the Spanish mission. In this way, the churches are only advisers and supporters of Phoebe and Paul's mission.

As his commentary begins with an intriguing amount of historical material, so it ends with excellent historical sketches of those Paul greets. If anyone doubts this, she should read Jewett's description of Prisca and Aquila. At the same time, many (more knowledgeable than the reviewer on this point) will take issue with Jewett's assessment of Junias—one that is becoming common among NT scholars, especially following Richard Bauckham, who argued that the Greek does not mean highly noted among the apostles. Jewett takes the view that Junias was a female apostle because the Greek word for “among” is used to distinguish one from others of the same class. Along with others, he quotes Chrysostom (who spoke Greek) to the effect that Junias was an apostle. This passage in Romans could possibly use more work in its redemptive-historical context since on this interpretation this text would present a unique instance of a female apostle in the NT and would suggest that there were other apostles besides the twelve and Paul himself. On the other hand, there is no evidence in the historical writings of the NT (the Gospels and Acts) for women apostles. Even when the church elected a new apostle, after the death of Judas, they chose from among men rather than Jesus' female companions. This causes serious problems for the present

popular interpretation of Romans 16:7 among NT scholars. And very fine articles exist in response to this interpretation, which the reviewer has not had time to peruse.

Yet even if one were to grant (for the sake of argument) that Junias was an apostle, this would not prove that women should be ordained to the office of teaching elder (as many conclude), any more than the existence of prophetesses during the NT period (Acts 21:9) argues for this point. For Paul's pastoral epistles (which give the responsibility of the office of pastor/elder to men) present us with the form of government for the church to follow from then on and after the close of the apostolic age. (Of course, many in the higher critical guild do not believe that Paul wrote the pastoral epistles and that is one way they get out of this argument.)

Certainly, in the case of prophetesses, it is reasonable to argue that they were unique intrusions of the future heavenly reality where there is no distinction between male and female, just as their supernatural prophetic gifts were unique intrusions of the future. This accords with the fact that the apostolic age was an age of miraculous acts and supernatural revelation, which were intrusions of the future age of resurrection in the present visible arena, in which the resurrection body will reverse all sickness, blindness, lameness, etc. That is, the existence of prophetesses was an intrusion in the visible arena of that which is now true in the church with regard to the invisible inheritance above; there is no distinction between male and female when it comes to possessing this inheritance even now (Gal. 3: 28-29). This could also explain Deborah's role in Judges 5<sup>3</sup>, she being an anticipation of the age to come. Interestingly, the pastoral epistles, which present us with the continuing order of the church, do not discuss the establishment of prophets in the church and in them the language of miracle is notably absent.

The above must be balanced with several other observations. In the gospels, Jesus implied that those having office in the church should not think of their office as one conferring upon them worldly dignity. They are not to rule like the Gentiles who Lord it over their people. Instead, they are servants of the church. As servants, while they are to be treated with dignity, they are not given a status above others in the church, whether women or men. In accord with this, Paul gives special recognition to women in Romans 16, calling on the church to greet more women than men and noting them with honor. They are of equal status with men in Christ Jesus in the church. The thought that women are of less dignity in the church since they are not ordained to office is akin to the mistaken exaltation of the clergy over the laity—according a higher status in Christ to the clergy over against the laity. Since this is not the case, it follows that a class (men), who might be called into the office, certainly have no higher status in Christ than women in Christ. Paul also extols women for their Christian deeds just as much as the men. Paul's very teaching of the peace that God brings in the church calls the church to recognize this and is at odds with all forms of clerical superiority.

Jewett rejects the conclusion of this letter (vv. 25-27) as an addition put in by a later redactor. One theological reason he gives is that in it Paul refers to "all nations" (v. 26) rather than the union of Jew and Gentiles. He thinks the latter option would have been a more fitting conclusion to the earlier issues of the letter. However, our later assessment of the theme of the righteousness of God (and the beginning of this letter) suggests that "all nations" is a fitting conclusion to Romans.

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<sup>3</sup>This and the point about NT prophetesses was suggested to me by M. M. Kline.

In reflecting back on Jewett's overall approach in his commentary on Romans 13-16, we suggest once again that he focuses too much on the horizontal aspects of the text. This is partially due to the fact that he neglects the vertical manifestation of the kingdom of God in Christ Jesus in the glorification of God's name. He thereby fails to see that even the horizontal elements of the text are grounded in this new semi-eschatological reality. At points Jewett does glimpse the eschatological (and we can appreciate him for what he does give us). Unfortunately, however, he ultimately flattens it to the horizontal dimension. In the light of the history of interpretation of these chapters, it may be right to have some sympathy with him here, as the history of interpretation has not often helped us understand the eschatological dimension of them. We feel our own weakness here as well, but Jewett does not attempt to understand these passages (with the possible exception of some glimmers in his comments on the kingdom of God in Rom. 14) in a way that transcends the earthly and cultural agenda that he supports elsewhere in his commentary. However, we hope to show below that the greater manifestation of the righteousness of God that has now occurred in Christ stands behind all that Paul says in Romans 14-16. It is this semi-eschatological fulfillment of the OT prophetic promises that brings us beyond the former manifestation of God's kingdom in an earthly arena. It thereby reveals the truly transcendent nature of God's kingdom come to its fullest manifestation in redemptive history.

### **Romans 15 and 14: Introduction to Our Argument**

In presenting our own reflections on Romans 14 to 16 in detail, we have decided to expound our argument in a logical rather than chronological sequence. That is, since we presuppose elements of our exegesis in chapter 15 for chapters 14, 13 and 16, we thought it best to lay out things in this order. While we will make occasional references to Romans 13, for the sake of space, a detailed exposition of that chapter will have to await another time outside the confines of our Jewett review. Nonetheless, one will gather from what is said below that that chapter must also be interpreted in the light of the greater manifestation of the righteousness of God that has come with the accomplishment of Christ's work in history, for it sits between Romans 1-12 and 14-16, all of which are dependent on that theme.

It may be wondered, if Paul presupposed chapter 15 in chapters 13 and 14, why did he not present the material in that order? Our answer is that the justification of God's name in redemptive history had already been laid out by Paul in Romans 1-11. It is, therefore, implicit in Romans 13 and especially Romans 14, even though the more explicit language connecting it to Romans 15 is only gradually unfolded in that chapter. This is not unlike Paul's other presentations of eschatology in which some of his central convictions are only progressively unfolded within his epistle. Think of the significant statement in 1 Corinthians 10, that the end of the ages has come upon us (v. 11). Yet, the general eschatological framework of which this is an example is already implicit in chapter 1 and laid out more clearly in chapter 2, where we have the wisdom of the rulers of this age (1 Cor. 2:6, 8) in implicit contrast to the wisdom of the age to come in the cross through the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:7-16).

### **Justification of God's Name in Redemptive History**

Here we begin by arguing that Romans 15:7-13 picks up the theme of the justification of God in redemptive history found earlier in this epistle (see our two earlier reviews of Jewett's commentary on Romans). In our discussion of Romans 2, we argued that one of the prophetic backgrounds of Paul's statement "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" is the

prophet Ezekiel. In Ezekiel 36:20ff, God tells Israel that he will take them out of exile and bring them into their promised inheritance forever in order to glorify his name, which has been blasphemed among the nations. When had it been blasphemed among the nations? It would seem that even though some of the nations knew that people were judged because the Lord was disciplining them for their sins, others among the nations believed that the Lord was weak because he could not defend his people and keep them from being oppressed by their enemies. The Lord had attached his own name to his people by way of covenant. He was the God of Israel. The surrounding nations had a similar point of view with respect to their own gods. The glory of their god was attached to the glory of their kingdom. As nations would go to war, their god would go before them, leading them into battle and fighting for them. Thus, it would appear that the nations who conquered worshiped a more powerful god (one who gave them victory) than the nations that they dispossessed. It seemed to the surrounding nations that the Lord God of Israel was not powerful enough to deliver his people. And one who is not powerful enough could not keep his promises. He could provide no justice, peace or hope for his people. This brought shame upon the name of God as the children of Israel were scattered among the nations.

Thus, God had determined to reverse the situation and bring glory to his name forever, as the God above all gods, finally victorious with an eschatological triumph that was irreversible. In order to do this, we suggested that God had resolved an apparent dilemma. On the one hand, he had to judge the sin of his people. On the other hand, he had to do this in such a way that they would not be vanquished by their enemies, but possess their heavenly inheritance forever. It was necessary for God to judge the sins of his people and the exile was a visible display of God's justice even to the righteous among Israel. (While the apostates in Israel were truly under God's curse, saints such as Daniel were externally [though not truly] under the curses of the covenant, as Daniel remarks in Daniel 9.) How would God resolve this dilemma and glorify his name among the nations forever? Paul found this answer in the death of Christ who bore the curse of the law in its entirety and, having satisfied it, was justified in his resurrection. Now his people would live in the promised inheritance of the Spirit forever. And even though this awaited its full manifestation in the general resurrection to come, it was manifested even now in the union of God's people with Christ in heaven. The resurrection of Christ in the giving forth of his Spirit at Pentecost is therefore truly a fulfillment of what was prophesied in Ezekiel 36. And even though saints like Paul are cast out among the nations and suffer under the hands of evil men, in Christ they may bear this suffering, not as a sign of God's curse, but in assurance that they are so firmly participants in the heavenly inheritance that nothing men do to them can take them from it.

Paul had already presented this fulfillment as a result of God being true to his promises. We argued that Romans 2:7-8 presents "truth" with eschatological overtones, indicating that even in natural revelation we have a display of the eschatological end of creation (Rom. 1:18, 25). In redemption God will bring the eschatological truth which the nations have rejected. Thus, when we find Paul saying, "let God be found true, though every man a liar," we have good reason to see in this eschatological overtones, those in which God is faithful (Rom. 3:3) to his promises. The background for this is already presented in Romans 2:24 with the quotation from Ezekiel 36:20ff and Isaiah 52:5. Thus, we have reason to interpret Paul's quotation of Psalm 116:11 (Rom. 3:4) in light of this. Even though God was judged by the nations and his name was put to shame, he has now prevailed in Jesus Christ. Therefore, he has been justified in his words. This is the semi-eschatological display of the truth of God. And it will reverse all the lying words of men (Rom. 3:13, 14), so that they will worship God for his glory which he has now revealed among the nations.

This connects us to Romans 15:7-13. For there, Christ has become a servant on behalf of the truth of God to confirm God's promises. And these promises to the fathers were expanded in the prophets as Paul's quotations from the Psalms and Isaiah make clear in Romans 15:9-12 ("as it is written", 15:9). Thus, we have here a fulfillment of the prophetic promises to which Paul implicitly alludes in Romans 2 and 3 and which frames this epistle (Rom. 1:2 and 16:26). This involves the display of God's righteousness (Rom. 3:25-26; 1:17) in which God has justified his name among the Gentiles. That is, he has done this so that he might be just and display his justice (Rom. 3:26). And in the display of this justice, his people have been justified in him in Jesus Christ (3:26). This has resulted in the Gentiles being equally called the people of God (Rom. 3:29) in a way that they were not called his people under the old covenant. Thus, God is now the God of Gentiles equally with the God of the Jews, whereas under the old covenant he was only considered most fully the God of the Jews. This was the case notwithstanding the privileges of aliens and strangers and the occasional inclusion of some Gentiles in the Jewish line (i.e., Ruth) as a foretaste of the age to come. Thus, in redemptive history, God has manifested his justice more fully in the actual accomplishment of Christ's work, and he has more fully manifested justification of his people as a result.

In this way, God has accomplished what he promised to the prophets (including Ezekiel and Isaiah). He has displayed his justice finally in fullness in history in Christ. Thus, he has satisfied the curse which his people justly deserved. He has raised them to the heavenly land forevermore. This should bring praise and honor to his name among the Gentiles, for now they are truly impelled to confess: "what god among the nations is like the Lord, almighty and victorious forevermore?" Thus, by the grace of God they sing praises to his great name (Rom. 15:9), and rejoice in him (Rom. 15:10) as he rules over them (15:12, a nice reversal of the nations ruling over his people in exile).

### **Paul's "God of" Phrases and the Righteousness of God**

A key way in which Paul describes God (insofar as he has justified his name among the nations) is "the God of hope". This phrase is clearly connected with the glorification of God in Christ found in 15:9-12. Paul indicates this connection by the use of God (who is to be glorified, 15:9) with "rejoice", the response of the Gentiles (15:10). This is followed by the parallel "God of hope" with "joy" (15:13). Paul implies that when God justifies his name the Gentiles rejoice. Thus, Paul wishes for the Romans that this same "God of hope" may fill them with joy. As a result, Paul uses the phrase "God of hope" in parallel with God, insofar as he has justified his name in Christ. It is this glorification of God that provides hope for the future of his people.

But why does Paul use the phrase "God of hope" to describe this? Why not simply say the God who gives hope? We believe this "God of" language reflects a covenant relationship. It expresses the greater manifestation of God's covenant relationship with his people now that the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel have been fulfilled semi-eschatologically.

To spell this out, we now consider this ascription that ties together the various sections of Romans 15 and 16. In each case (Rom. 15:5, 13, 33; 16:20), it is not the same ascription applied to God, but the same kind of phrase is used. It is the "God of x" where some ascription of God is plugged in the x spot. Thus, we find "the God of perseverance and comfort" (15:5), "the God of hope" (15:13), and "the God of peace" (15:33; 16:20). We believe this is similar to what we have when God says, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex. 3:6; 1 Kg.



18:36). In this statement, God describes himself as the one who is in covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This fits with Jesus' interpretation of this expression. From this "God of" language, Jesus argues that God is not the God of the dead but of the living (Matt. 22:32). In this way, he makes it clear that this phrase describes the relationship God has with those whom he redeems and that relationship is described in terms of the covenant. Paul himself uses this language of the covenant relationship between God and his people in Romans 3:29, "or is God *the God* of Jews only? Is he not *the God* of Gentiles also? Yes of Gentiles also." Even though the italicized words in this translation (NASB) are an insertion, they truly represent the sense of the text. This can even be seen by an English reader. When we take away the italicized words the same sense essentially remains. It is the language of covenant.

Again, my suggestion is that when God describes himself as the "God of comfort", the "God of hope", and the "God of peace", he is expressing his relationship to his people insofar as he is related to them in these last days. That is, in their fullest import these phrases describe God insofar as he is related to his people in the new covenant. He has become to us a God of comfort, a God of hope and a God of peace in a new way at this point in redemptive history. In this way, he gives his people semi-eschatological comfort, hope and peace as a result of fulfilling the prophetic promises of the OT. As we will see, these things result from God justifying his name in redemptive history. In this, he has become their righteousness, comfort, perseverance, hope and peace. He is the eschatological refuge for his people and he has now most fully revealed that in redemptive history. For Paul, no less than for Hebrews, God himself and his arena is the source, life and goal of the eschatological hope, now semi-realized.

The covenant relationship between God and his people that lies behind this "God of" language fitly expresses the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. It is this fulfillment which forms the backdrop of the justification of God's name in redemptive history. In this way, this "God of" language is appropriately tied to the fact that God justified his name in the death and resurrection of Christ.

This connection to Christ's resurrection is further unfolded in the other "God of" language found in Romans 15:6. Here God is described as the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". We find in this language that God is the "God . . . of" Jesus Christ in his Lordship. While this language ultimately has reference to the fact that God the Father has eternally been the Father of the Son, we believe that Paul is here suggesting that Christ's relationship as Son to the Father has been more fully revealed in his resurrection. This is suggested by the way in which Paul elsewhere uses the "God of" language in this chapter, as we have described above. It also fits with the manifestation of Christ's sonship in his resurrection at the beginning of Romans (1:4).

This expresses the covenant relationship God the Father has with the resurrected Christ, as mediator. That is, he refers to Christ, insofar as he has been "declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). When Paul here refers to "Lord Jesus Christ", he is thinking of Jesus Christ in his resurrected state. He is the *Lord* Jesus Christ in a new way. Paul has made this connection between the Lordship of Christ and his resurrection earlier in Romans 10:9. He speaks about confessing with your mouth Jesus as Lord. This is sandwiched in between a discussion of Christ's resurrection in Romans 10:6-8 and the words "God raised him from the dead" (10:9). This suggests that for Paul the confession of Jesus as Lord is most fully associated with (though not exhausted in) Christ's resurrection. The mediator has become "Lord" now in

greater fullness than he was in his earthly state. Just as Jesus Christ has become Lord in a new way, so God has entered into greater covenant communion with the mediator in his resurrection state. God has become the “God of” our Lord Jesus Christ—God has entered into a fuller covenant relationship with the mediator in his resurrection. It is through the resurrection of Christ that God is the “God of peace” and the “God of hope” and the “God of comfort” to believers, because in the resurrection God has become the God of the resurrected Christ. He has become the Father of the resurrected Christ in a new way. Therefore, he gives those who believe the comfort and the hope and the peace that comes from the resurrection of their Savior.

The covenant associations of this phrase “God of hope” also present us with a relative contrast to the exilic period. During that time, the fact that God was a God of hope to his people was somewhat eclipsed by the fact that the people had gone into exile and were separated from the land of promise. Even leading up to the exile, Isaiah could speak about Israel’s sin (Isa. 58:1) leading to the loss of hope (59:9, 11). The righteous Isaiah also identifies with the people (“our transgression . . . and our sins testify against us,” 59:12), implying that he experiences this situation as less than the full revelation of God’s provision of hope.

The nations also taunted that God does not appear to be all-powerful. As a result, how is he able to provide hope for his people? How can he give them hope for the future? Now that God has justified his name in redemptive history and manifested his great power in the resurrection of Christ, he has provided the historical proof and ground for everlasting hope. He has demonstrated that he (not the gods of the nations) is the God of hope. He (as the God of his people) is the God of hope. In covenant with his people, he gives them eschatological hope.

As for the Gentiles, they were not his people and were without hope in the world. They were *completely* cut off from the presence of God. Now their situation has been *absolutely* reversed in this exultation of God’s name among the nations. As a result, God has given all Gentiles who believe in him eternal hope.

It is this language (“God of hope” and “God of peace”) which implicitly casts its light upon Romans 14 (and from there Rom. 12-13) that helps us to see how even these chapters are to some extent governed by the theme of the justification of God’s name in redemptive history. This should not be surprising to us since chapters 12-16 are introduced with the phrase “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God” (12:1). In other words, we are to view chapters 12-16 as flowing out of the mercy of God insofar as it has been revealed in chapters 1-11. And a central theme of those chapters was the “righteousness of God”, also found in the thesis statement of this letter (1:17).

When we come to Romans 14, we hope to show how the language of the “God of hope” and “God of peace” casts its shadow back on that chapter. But before we do that, we need to set the stage more fully. We will do so by considering two things. First, we have mentioned Isaiah above together with Ezekiel, and some readers may be questioning the prominence of the righteousness of God as we have interpreted it because they recognize that Isaiah is quoted far more often in Romans than Ezekiel. Thus, we hope to show that Isaiah understood the righteousness of God in a similar way to Ezekiel. This also sets us up for Paul’s quote from Isaiah in Romans 14:11. Second, we will expand the redemptive historical significance of Paul’s use of “accept” and “acceptable” in Romans and its connection to the righteousness of God in Romans 15. This will

help us see further how the righteousness of God forms the background for Paul's discussion in Romans 14.

### **Isaiah: Background to God's Righteousness in Romans**

We have elucidated the justification of God in redemptive history in terms of the book of Ezekiel (Ezek. 36:20-32) in part 1 of our review of Jewett, as the quotation from Romans 2:24 may be taken from there. While it is true that Ezekiel 20:8-9, 13-14 and 21-22 indicates that God poured out his wrath on Israel for his own name sake, it is also clear Ezekiel 36:22 and 32 indicates that God will reverse Israel's exile for his own name sake. The book of Isaiah presents a similar theme, but from Isaiah's point of view. Being more prominent in Romans, Isaiah probably serves as the primary background for Paul's recognition of eschatological fulfillment in Christ. Isaiah 52 and the beginning of Isaiah 53 are clearly prominent in Romans, indicated by the quotations Paul makes from this section of Isaiah (Isa. 52:5 in Rom. 2:24; Isa. 52:7 in Rom. 10:15; Isa. 52:15 in Rom. 15:21; and Isa. 53:1 in Rom. 10:16). In Isaiah 52, we find a similar theme to that of Ezekiel 36:21-32 in which God's name is blasphemed among the nations (v. 5). What is explicit in Ezekiel 36:22 and 32, that God will save his people for his own name sake, is at the very least implicit in the next verse (Isa. 52:6). In it God says, "therefore my people shall know my name; therefore in that day I am the one who is speaking, 'Here I am'". Isaiah 52:9-10 clearly makes this ("my people shall know my name") an eschatological projection in which God will implicitly save his people for his own glory. There God will redeem his people from slavery to their enemies by redeeming Jerusalem and thereby comforting his people (52:9). In this way, the Lord will "bare his holy arm in the sight of all nations" so that "all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God" (52:10). In baring his holy arm before all nations, Isaiah is suggesting that this will resound to the glory of God among the nations of the earth. Isaiah then asks, "To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (53:1). That is, the arm of the Lord is the power of God revealed in the saving work. This is revealed in the message of the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16)—to the ends of the earth (Isa. 52:10). As a result, by quoting Isaiah 52:7, Paul suggests that the message of the good news is that "your God reigns!" (Isa. 52:7 in Rom. 10:15). Thus, Isaiah suggests the same theme of the justification of God's name among the nations as Ezekiel, the name that had been "continually blasphemed all day long" (Isa. 52:5) is now exalted in that the Lord "has bared his holy arm in the sight of all nations" (52:10), resulting in the triumph of God—"your God reigns!" (52:7). In this is fulfilled the prophecy that they will "know my name" (Isa. 52:6).

Appropriately then, Paul quotes this section of Isaiah twice in Romans 10:15-16 after discussing the corresponding new manifestation of justification taking place in the new era—an era in which there is no distinction between Jew and Greek now in Christ (Rom. 10:3-13; note especially verse 12). In the same context of Romans, Paul also quotes Isaiah 28:16 in Romans 10:11, "whoever believes in him will not be disappointed." This statement is especially significant in Romans 10:1-10 as it brackets the whole section, also being quoted by Paul in Romans 9:33. Chapter 28 of Isaiah (from which this quote is taken) is more difficult than chapter 52. However, Isaiah does seem to speak of a salvation that will come to the people of God who trust in him in the midst of his judgment and will therefore not be put to shame. This appears to be a reversal of captivity so that "in that day the Lord of hosts will become a beautiful crown and a glorious diadem to the remnant of his people" (Isa. 28:5).

Isaiah also records the story of God's deliverance of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah when the Assyrian Rabshakeh taunted saying, "Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?" (Isa. 36:20). In this, Rabshakeh presents this attempted siege as a battle between the gods of Assyria and the God of Israel. It appears that the God of the nation who is victorious is more powerful than the God of those who are vanquished. This is a direct affront to the glory of the name of the God of Israel and his power. However, in this case God shows his power over the Assyrian gods by sending Rabshakeh away to his death (cf. 2 Chr. 32:21). In this, he shows his own glory in anticipation of the day in which he will bring eschatological deliverance to his people and so glorify his name. In this instance, God has delayed the exile of his people. (It will not be Assyria who vanquishes them but Babylon.) And the salvation anticipates the day in which God will redeem Israel for his own name sake, vanquishing the gods of the nations. This holding back of God's wrath may also anticipate the exile of God's people in which he restrains the full outpouring of his wrath so as not to destroy them in order that they may be redeemed (for his name sake). This appears to be the case in Isaiah 48:9 and 11, where God says, "for the sake of my name I delay my wrath, and for my praise I restrain it for you, in order not to cut you off"; and once again "for my own sake, for my own sake, I will act; for how can my name be profaned? And my glory I will not give to another". Here he ultimately looks ahead to the new Exodus, indicated by the words "go forth from Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans! Declare with the sound of joyful shouting, proclaim this, send it out to the end of the earth; say, 'The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob'" (Isa. 48:20). God will bring about this new Exodus for the glory of his name. The justification of God's name is found in other chapters of Isaiah, especially in Isaiah 45, which we will examine later in connection with Paul's quotation of it in Romans 14:11.

### **Acceptable to God for the Glory of God**

As we have seen, this justification of God's name in redemptive history brings mercy to the Gentiles so that they have become acceptable to God (Rom. 15:16). Paul states in Romans 15:7, "wherefore accept one another just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God". What is this? Why does God's acceptance of us bring him glory? One answer that can be given to this is the theme of the justification of God's name in redemptive history. We have already seen how this central theme in Romans has backgrounds in Isaiah and Ezekiel. God has made his people semi-eschatologically acceptable. That is, he has reversed the situation of the exile in which his people were cast off overshadowing the full display of God's acceptance of his people. They had been cast aside. However, the prophets predicted that God would reverse the situation and bring his people into his inheritance forever and ever. He would show his people to be fully acceptable in his sight by bringing them into the everlasting inheritance. There they would be brought close to the Lord. During the exile, the people of God were cast from the promised land and this land was a sign of God's presence with his people. The visible display of God's curses in the external aspect of the Mosaic covenant dampened the full revelation of his acceptance of his people. They were separated from his presence in the land and the temple that had been destroyed. God will reverse this situation in the eschatological future, in which he will bring his people into the glory land forever and manifest most fully his acceptance of them in the historical accomplishment of the work of Christ. Thus, God will justify his name by manifesting that his people are most fully acceptable in his sight. By bringing his people into their heavenly inheritance, God reverses his display of curse upon the covenant people. He thereby manifests most fully his acceptance of them as possessors of the eschatological inheritance, now semi-realized.

The point is when the people of God were cast from the land under a visible display of the curses of the covenant, this display of curse was a display of non-acceptance. We do not say that this was essentially true of the elect people of God in exile such as Daniel. However, Daniel was covenantally tied by blood to the Jewish people as the visible people of God, many of whom were apostate. To the degree that the curse was manifested upon the covenant people as a whole, their non-acceptance before God was manifested<sup>4</sup>. To put it another way, the full revelation of God's acceptance of them had not yet been fully displayed in redemptive history. This would only come about with the historical death and resurrection of Christ when their present possession of the eternal inheritance above in Christ would be more fully manifested. At that time, their possession of the inheritance would not be clouded with the visible curses of the covenant keeping them from the promised land on earth—a sign of God's disfavor. In this, their experience would differ from the OT saints who, although possessing heavenly inheritance by faith even then (Heb. 11), did not experience the full display of the revelation of this glory while in exile.

Ezekiel and Isaiah had promised that in the future God would justify his own name by bringing his people into the everlasting land. He would do this for the sake of his own name, not for their sake. Thus, when God more fully manifests his acceptance of his people; he justifies his name. As such, God's acceptance of his people at this time in redemptive history manifests the glory of God. He accepts his people for his glory. This fits with what Paul says in Romans 15:7, "accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God". From there Paul goes on to describe the truth of God (15:8) to confirm the promises given to the father's with the justification of God's own name. In this, the Gentiles glorified God for his mercy at this period in redemptive history.

Another indication within the book of Romans that the term "accepted" or "acceptable" is connected to the mercy of God as a revelation of the justification of God's own name in redemptive history is found in the usage Paul makes of it in Romans 12:1. This verse is written in response to the righteousness of God in chapters 1-11. It is written in terms of that righteousness revealed in the mercy of God in the previous chapters. "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." It is in light of God's mercies revealed in the fullness of the times that we are able to offer up ourselves as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God. In other words, in light of the revelation of God's righteousness interconnected with his mercy, we are made acceptable to God in Jesus Christ. This connection between the mercy of God and the language of acceptance is found earlier in Romans 11:15 and its connection with Romans 11:32. Here we have a description of the absolute acceptance of God for those who are reconciled to him in Jesus Christ. And the chapter concludes with this summary—God shutting up "all in disobedience that he might show mercy to all" (11:32). In having mercy, he accepts his people in Jesus Christ. Thus, Romans 12:1 essentially says *in light of God's mercy*, present your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable to God. We suggest that if acceptance can be used to describe the mercy of God *absolutely* (11:15), it can also be used to describe the greater manifestation of mercy found in this new era of redemptive history. Paul had used language of God's mercy in Romans 9 to describe the new Exodus in Christ Jesus, which brought a mercy that was absolute to the Gentiles and a relatively greater manifestation of God's mercy in redemptive history to the Jews. In this new Exodus, he says, "I will have mercy on whom

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<sup>4</sup>When parceled out, this was essentially true of the apostates, but not essentially true of the regenerate elect.

I have mercy” (9:15). Then he speaks of making known the riches of his glory upon the “vessels of mercy” (9:23) and uses the prophecy from Hosea to describe this. The language of Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 is that of an eschatological projection looking ahead to the coming age of the kingdom. Its backdrop is Israel’s rebellion against God in which she is cast from the land and, relatively speaking, considered “not my people” (Hos. 2:23). God’s covenant with her has not been essentially broken off; however, its manifestation has been overshadowed to the point where she has been called “not my people” (Hos. 2:23; Rom. 9:25). Thus, Hosea’s eschatological projection of a new day in which those who are not my people would be called my people indicates the new and final eschatological manifestation of God’s covenant union with his people come to its own in Christ. That is, there will be a future day in which the people of God will not be cast out from his presence, in which he will bring them into an everlasting land forever—an arena in which they will always be called “my people”. This prophecy also relates to the Gentiles in the future insofar as Israel in exile had been identified with the Gentiles who were “not my people”. Both together in the future (through a new Exodus) would be “my people”. This new Exodus has now been semi-eschatologically revealed through the historical death and resurrection of Christ and the calling of the Gentiles to faith (Rom. 9:25). In this way, the mercy of God in Hosea and Paul describes both an absolute transformation of Gentiles from complete darkness to light as well as a relatively new manifestation of God’s mercy to the Jewish people (even the elect among them) in which his mercy would be manifested in a greater way in the future kingdom of God. Thus, Paul can present the mercy of God in terms of a relative newness in redemptive history. As the terms “acceptance”, “acceptable” and “accepted by God” are the result of God’s mercy, they may also express something relatively new in the history of redemption. We believe this is the case in Romans 12-15 where acceptance refers both to the absolute acceptance of God’s people in Christ and the greater manifestation of that acceptance in the new age. Just as the mercy of God in Romans 9 revealed his faithfulness to his word (9:6) and his justice (9:14), so also the acceptance of God in Romans 12-15 is dependent upon the fulfillment of the truth of God (Rom. 15:8) and upon the revelation of God’s righteousness in Christ Jesus related to it. And just as the mercy of God in Romans 9 is the result of his power in the new Exodus (9:15, 17), so also the power of God who is able (Rom. 16:25) brings salvation in the power of signs and wonders in the power of the Spirit (15:19).

This brings us back to Romans 15. There we also find that the language of accept and mercy is put together by Paul in Romans 15:7-9 where “accept one another just as Christ accepted us to the glory of God” is then connected with “for the Gentiles to glorify God for his mercy” (15:9). Notice how glory also unites these two verses—accepted us for the glory of God in order to glorify God for his mercy. In this way, we can see that in Romans 15:7 the indicative of the justification of God’s name in redemptive history grounds the imperative to accept one another. Accept one another just as God has accepted you for his eschatological glory. Thus, the righteousness of God in the gospel in Christ Jesus (in light of God’s mercy, Rom. 12:1) is the ground for the imperatives in Romans 12-16.

This includes the imperative that begins in Romans 12, “present your bodies a living sacrifice” (v. 1). That is, present yourself a living sacrifice in Christ Jesus, the final sacrifice. In this you are presenting yourselves as suffering servants. And this is only possible because God has made us “acceptable” (Rom. 12:1) through his righteousness manifested in Christ. It is because God has more fully manifested his righteousness in redemptive history and semi-eschatologically justified his people that they are not under the curses of the Mosaic covenant in their suffering (even while

they may be under God's discipline for a time). As such, in their sufferings for the sake of Christ, it is now more fully manifested that they are acceptable to God. Thus, while we will not comment much on it in this review, it is always to be remembered that it is this manifestation of the righteousness of God that grounds the church's union with the sufferings of Christ. Unlike Christ's own sufferings on earth, the church's resurrection and justification in Christ always precedes sacrificial suffering acceptable to God. It is because of our acceptance in Christ that Christ's sufferings are mirrored in us. This relationship of suffering to acceptance is also implied in Romans 15. "Bear the weaknesses" (v. 1) seems to refer back to Romans 12:1-2, present your bodies as a living sacrifice. That is, bear one another's burdens, which implies some form of suffering. And he connects this suffering with God's *acceptance* mirrored in us at the end of this section. "Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7).

### **Romans 14: Acceptance and God's Righteousness**

The way in which God's righteousness stands behind his acceptance helps us better understand Romans 14. Paul says, "now accept the one who is weak in faith" (v. 1). Once again the exhortation is to accept one another. Thus, the perspective that we have seen in Romans 15 in which the justification of God's name in redemptive history grounds the imperative to accept one another throws its light back upon Romans 14. This is especially seen in Romans 14:3 which says not to judge your brother "because God has accepted him". And Romans 14:18 says he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God. Thus, in chapter 14, Paul encourages us to accept one another (14:1), i.e., the weak in faith especially, and not judge him who eats "for God has accepted him". The note is both on we accepting one another and God accepting him. The acceptance of the brother is grounded in the justification of God's name in Christ and his semi-eschatological justification in him. Thus, the imperative to accept him is grounded in God's righteousness now manifested in Christ.

The justification of God's name in redemptive history can also be seen implicitly in chapter 14 with that chapter's emphasis on the Lordship of Christ. Romans 15:6 will connect the Lordship of Christ with the glorification of God's name which involves God's acceptance. In other words, you are to "be of the same mind" (15:5, i.e., accept one another) so that with "one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:6). And this glorification springs from the manifestation of God's righteousness. We have already seen in this context that God is the God of the Lord Jesus Christ in his resurrection. We have also suggested that the implicit "God of" language here is connected to the justification of God's name. In chapter 15, this new reality encourages the unity of the saints (i.e., accepting one another). It also encourages them to glorify the God of Christ the Lord in his resurrection. So the prominence of Christ's Lordship is not surprising in a chapter (14) that is grounded in the revelation of the righteousness of God (Rom. 1-11). Thus, the Lordship of Christ is intimately connected with the justification of God in redemptive history as its background. This connection of Christ's Lordship with the justification of God's name in Romans 14 is reinforced by the significance of the Lordship of Christ in accepting one another. (Of course, we have already noted above the theme of accepting one another in chapter 14.) Christ's Lordship itself is emphasized in 14:9 that Christ "died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living". The Lordship of Christ is also found in that we are not to judge the servant of another (14:4) because to his own master he stands or falls. It is the Lord who is able to make him stand and thus is his master. Thus, Christ's Lordship as the exalted resurrection Lord is the ground for the exhortation not to judge another. So also in 14:6, the one

who “observes the day, observes it to the Lord, and he who eats does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God, etc.” Once again, the Lordship of Christ grounds Christian liberty and the freedom of the saint not to be tyrannized by the conscience of another in things that are morally indifferent<sup>5</sup>. Romans 14:8 also speaks of us either living or dying and in both cases doing it to and for the Lord. In either case, “we are the Lord’s” (14:8) and Paul culminates this with the statement “for to this end Christ died and lived again that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living”(14:9). It is for this reason that you are not to judge your brother.

If there are any doubts, there are several indications that Paul connects this theme of the Lordship of Christ with the new reality in redemptive history. First, we will look to more subtle allusions. Romans 14:6 notes that he who eats does so for the Lord, “for he gives thanks to God”; and the one who does not eat “gives thanks to God”. The giving of thanks here indicates the reversal of Romans 1:21, where the pagans did not give thanks to God. In this way, Romans 14 is similar to Romans 15, in which the praise of the Gentiles is a reversal of their idolatry in Romans 1:18-32. And their praise is a result of the glorification of God’s name in redemptive history. Also, Romans 14:8, “if we live we live to the Lord” reminds us of Romans 6:10, “but the life that he lives, he lives to God”. While Romans 6:10 is about Christ, Paul says in the next verse “even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6:11). In Romans 6, Paul has been speaking about the new age in Christ Jesus “so that we too might walk in newness of life” (6:4). This is also indicated in Romans 6:14, “for sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace”. We have argued in part 1 of our review of Jewett’s commentary that this verse connects us back to the redemptive historical perspective on the law that Paul has in Romans 5:20-21. So also, we are to see that Romans 14:8 (“if we live, we live to the Lord”) comes to its most full flowering in the present time, resulting from the fact that the historical death and resurrection have actually been accomplished in redemptive history—“that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living” (14:9). Perhaps the most obvious verse in Romans 14 showing that the Lordship of Christ displays the newness of this age is verse 14. There Paul makes it clear that he is convinced “in the Lord Jesus” that “nothing is unclean in itself”. This is a statement that he could not fully make in the same way if he were living under the OT economy, where there was a distinction between clean and unclean foods. The revelation to Peter in Acts (10:9-16; 11:5-11) that God had made all Gentile foods clean (10:15; 11:9) was an indication that he also could eat and drink with Gentiles in that God has now fully accepted them in the new age, assuming they trust in him with godly fear (10:35). Paul takes the same perspective when he rebukes Peter for failing to eat with Gentile Christians in Galatians 2:12-14 and grounding it in the semi-eschatological manifestation of justification (Gal. 2:16-21), which he will expound in Galatians 3:6-4:11. Thus, the statement that nothing is unclean in itself is something that Paul is fully convinced of in the new age in the Lord Jesus, in light of his resurrection.

This new redemptive historical perspective delineated in 14:14 casts its shadow back on the rest of the chapter. There we have the issue of eating foods and not judging your brother in respect to them “for God has accepted him” (14:3). We also have the issue of respecting “one day above another”, which had a parallel in the old covenant to clean or unclean foods, both having

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<sup>5</sup> Not that these things can be done in a morally neutral way; they are either done to the glory of God or not. Nonetheless, whether to eat or not to eat—that of itself is not a decision that involves a question of right or wrong, as long as it is done by faith and not against conscience. Both may be done to the glory of God and in giving him thanks.



ceremonial overtones. However, at this time, in contrast to the old covenant era, we are not to judge a brother with regard to the observance of one day above another. Romans 14:6 puts these two things together—the observance of days and the eating foods. Thus, we clearly see that there is something new in redemptive history going on earlier in the chapter. And this continues later on in 14:15. The issue of food is brought up once again—that you not destroy your brother for the sake of food. And it is brought to a crescendo by the fact that the kingdom of God “is not eating and drinking” (v. 17). Therefore, once again something new has occurred in redemptive history. You are not to tear down this new work of God for the sake of food (14:20). And Paul mentions eating once again in 14:21 and 23. All of these are declared from the perspective of this era in the history of redemption—the full manifestation of the kingdom of God, in which there is no distinction between clean or unclean. The Lord has accepted both the eater and abstainer of the once unclean. He has made them both acceptable and in this has justified his own name in redemptive history.

### **The Kingdom of God and the Justification of God’s Name**

Romans 14:17 states “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”. From what does this righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit result? The justification of God’s name in redemptive history. The parallel of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit with what follows in Romans 15:13 is evident. There we find the “God of hope” was to fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the eschatological gift of the Spirit arises from the “God of hope”, language describing the justification of God’s name in redemptive history. Just as the prophets foretold, God has justified his name by bringing his people into the eschatological inheritance forever. And the fruit of this is everlasting joy and peace. This manifestation of God’s justice has brought the kingdom of God. The kingdom that Paul proclaims is the greater manifestation of God’s kingdom that has arrived through the life, death and resurrection of Christ. It reminds us of Romans 1:3-4, in which Jesus is born the son of David and raised in power. This is the kingdom of the son of David raised in power through his resurrection from the dead. The newness of the kingdom is emphasized once again by the fact that the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, which places it in relative contrast to the old covenant administration. For, as we have seen, the context has to do with something new in redemptive history where “in the Lord Jesus” there is “nothing unclean in itself”. For even if there is an allusion in Romans 14 to meat sacrificed to idols (like 1 Cor. 10:14-33)<sup>6</sup>, Paul’s instruction flows out of this new era in the history of redemption in which there is no distinction between clean and unclean (Rom. 14:14). Thus, to judge those who eat or do not eat is to act as if the ground of Paul’s imperative did not exist—to act as if we have not come to the new era in Christ.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>If Jewett is correct, then the basic background to Romans 14 is the fact that the primary meat available to the poor in Rome was pork. If so, it would seem that the reason the “weak” eats only vegetables (Rom.14:2) may not be related to the same issue of meat sacrificed to idols, but only to their desire to keep kosher according to the OT law. At the same time, Jewett notes the fact that this pork was distributed during religious festivals; so there may still be a tie in with 1 Corinthians 10.

<sup>7</sup>In this connection, we may ask whether those who judge those who eat and those who judge those who do *not* eat are both going backward in redemptive history. You may say, it seems plausible that the one who judges him who eats is

The peace of the kingdom (also found in Rom. 15:13) also looks ahead to the “God of peace” (Rom. 15:33; 16:20). This once again shows us how it sets the stage for the justification of God’s name in redemptive history, which is implicit in this verse. We also find that those who serve Christ in this way of the kingdom are “acceptable to God” (14:18). This is in accord with the fact that God justifies his name by making his people acceptable to him through the enthroned Messiah. This brings glory to God (15:7) and his kingdom. This peace of the kingdom is then connected to the building up of one another (14:19). Just as God has accepted his people (and by implication built them up in this) so they also are to make for peace in union with Christ and build one another up. In this way, the work of God in Romans 15:20 is what God has done in justifying his name by making his people acceptable in his sight (i.e., fully revealing and unfolding their acceptance in redemptive history). As a result, if one were to go backward in redemptive history by living by the clean and unclean laws of the OT, one would be tearing down the work of God for the sake of food (14:20). Thus, Paul reiterates his statement that all things are clean in accordance with a new era. At the same time, he shows that the spirit of this new reality is primarily that of love. This involves a recognition of a liberty of conscience that accords with love for the brothers and building them up in this new reality. This is opposed to a tearing down in which “they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense” (14:20). In other words, “whatever is not from faith is sin” (14:23). That is, all things must be done in accordance with the age of the greater manifestation of faith that is in Christ Jesus. This faith lays hold of the fullness of the revelation of God’s justifying work in Christ. It thereby lays hold of the fullness of that invisible kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, fostering it in the church.

All must be done in the spirit of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit—a life oriented to the kingdom of God by faith. As such, this perspective calls Christians not to tear down this glorious work of God for the sake of food (14:20). That is, “do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died” (14:15). At the same time, Paul acknowledges that this building up of the kingdom is the work of God in Christ in such a way that “the Lord is able to make him stand” (14:4). Those who live in this way are living out of faith in the justification of God’s name in Christ and of their semi-eschatological justification in him.

### **Christ the Judge**

We will begin by noting how this theme permeates Romans 14, suggesting its connection to another theme—the exhortation not to destroy (Rom. 14:15, 20). For us to judge (in matters now indifferent) is to destroy, but for Christ to judge his people is to build them up. The implied and explicit negative imperatives spoken of in this chapter are not to judge your brother (14:1, 3, 10, 13) and not to destroy your brother (14:15, 20). The imperatives “not” to “judge him who eats” or

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like a Jew returning to the OT dietary laws and judging Gentiles who eat. But what about those who judge those who do *not* eat? How is this a reversion in redemptive history? We suggest that they may be like Gentiles who judged God’s people in the former era for refusing to eat certain (unclean) foods. (For instance, in 2 and 4 Maccabees, Gentiles forced Jews to eat pork or die.) If this is implied, this may be another connection to the justification of God’s name in which the judgment of the Gentiles against God’s people is now reversed in Christ. Thus, Christ’s righteous judgment of his people takes place in the light of his resurrection—in the light of the justification of God’s name and the semi-eschatological justification of his people in him. On the other hand, sinful judgment of others is opposed to this insofar as it is a reversion in redemptive history.

“him who does not eat” (14:3) are parallel to “do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food” (14:20).

This connection between judging a brother and destroying or tearing down the work of God can also be seen from the movement of Romans 14:13-20. Paul says in Romans 14:13, “therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine not to put an obstacle or stumbling block in a brother’s way”. In this verse, he presents an alternative—judging one another is placed in opposition to *not* putting a stumbling block in a brother’s way. That is, if we put a stumbling block in a brother’s way, we are judging the brother. This subject of Romans 14:13 leads naturally into Romans 14:15 (do not destroy), suggesting that to judge and put a stumbling block is parallel with “to destroy”. Judging the brother is therefore played out as further tearing down the work of God (14:20)—tearing down the semi-eschatological building of God—his heavenly kingdom as it expresses itself now in joy and peace in the life of the church. As such, the work of God is a result of God’s justification of his name in redemptive history. This is opposed to our judging our brother. That is, insofar as God has justified his name in redemptive history, he has manifested the justification of his people semi-eschatologically. They are not to be judged by men, including their brothers. Instead, God has justified his name in Christ Jesus, therefore exalting Christ as the judge. God is justified after having been judged by men. Having manifested his justice in redemptive history, he shows himself to be that just judge who judges rightly and fulfills his promises. As the all-powerful fulfiller of his promises, he shows that he can guarantee his future justice as the all-powerful judge of heaven and earth. The Son of God raised from the dead is declared to be the judge of the living and the dead—the justification of God’s name is found in him. Thus, the Lord alone can judge the brother. And the Lord’s judgment has both an already and not yet vector. He has passed judgment on his sins, justifying him in Christ’s resurrection. Thereby, God has accepted him (Rom. 14:3). So presently “to his own master he stands or falls” (Rom. 14:4). As for the future, we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10).

We may be reminded of Acts 17:31 where Christ is exulted in his resurrection as the judge of the living and dead, which includes the fact that God will judge the world through him. In this, once again, we spell out the possible connections to the justification of God’s name in redemptive history. God is just and has manifested his justice in redemptive history. Christ the God-man is just and has manifested his justice. He has also been declared just as the mediator in his resurrection, having fully satisfied God’s wrath. Thus, Christ is now fully manifested as just in his resurrection life.

This reasoning appears to be parallel to what may lie behind Acts 17:31. For with respect to Acts 17 one might ask why Christ’s resurrection is a proof to all men that he will judge the world in righteousness. How would all men (who do not all have special revelation) know this simply from his resurrection? Perhaps their reasoning goes something like this, ‘if he were a sinner he would have remained in death. But since he was raised forever we know he was not a sinner, but died only for others. This is confirmed by the fact that his resurrection is not grounded in someone else’s resurrection (as a sinner’s future resurrection is grounded upon Christ’s resurrection). In this way, Christ has been shown to be just by his resurrection. And since he is just, he can justly judge others. While sinners know they are further condemned by approving the sinful deeds of others<sup>8</sup>,

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<sup>8</sup>Which is further confirmed for the readers of this article in Romans 1:32.

he alone as just must fully do the opposite in time by judging them for their sins.’ Such might be the reasoning (as gleaned from Paul’s other statements) that makes Christ’s resurrection a proof to all men that God will judge the world in righteousness through him. Nonetheless, those who are dead in their sins will also suppress this truth in unrighteousness until they are transformed by the Spirit of Christ. As John also says, “for everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (John 3:20). Whatever might be said about this, it is clear that Acts 17:31 presents Christ as judge as a result of his resurrection. This is also the case in Romans 14 insofar as Paul grounded Christ’s authority as judge in his resurrection Lordship.

In Romans 14, Paul clearly traces out this theme of Christ as judge in relationship to the theme of Christ as Lord. It is intricately connected with those verses that refer to Christ as Lord in this passage, that is, resurrected Lord. This exhortation not to judge is put within an inclusio bracketed by the word “accept”—“now accept the one who is weak in faith” (14:1) . . . “for God has accepted him” (14:3). In between these two notes of acceptance (exhortation and God’s acceptance) are found the notes of passing judgment. “Not for the purpose of passing judgment” (14:1) and “let not him who does not eat judge him who eats” (14:3). (Is this a chiasm?) We have suggested that God’s acceptance is connected to the manifestation of his justice and the justification of his name in redemptive history. Thus, Romans 14:3 appears to find its background in God’s justification of his own glory. From this, it follows that the exhortation of accepting the one who is weak (Rom. 14:1) is an imperative grounded in the indicative so described. That is, the exhortations not to judge are found folded within this redemptive historical manifestation of God’s justification of his name by which he has accepted his people. He has accepted them; he has most fully manifested their justification now in Christ Jesus. Therefore, the imperative not to pass judgment upon them flows from our identification with God’s justification of his name in Christ.

This justification of God’s name in redemptive history is intimately connected with the resurrection Lordship of Christ in the verses that follow (Rom. 14:4-9). Christ is set forth as Lord and Lord of his people. For this reason, we are not to judge one another. This suggests that Christ as Lord is the judge, not we. Verse 4 begins with “who are you to judge the servant of another?” This lays out once again the theme not to judge. It is followed by “to his own *master* he stands or falls” (14:4, emphasis added). This note on the Lordship of Christ is found again at the end of 14:9. Christ is the Lord both of the dead and the living in his resurrection. What we will see below is that it is contrasted with a brother judging another brother. Christ alone is the Lord and judge. This follows after the theme of “God has accepted him”, which we believe is connected to the justification of God’s name in redemptive history. This also suggests once again that the resurrection Lordship of Christ is interconnected with this manifestation of God’s justice. this time in redemptive history. Thus, Christ’s Lordship results in the reversal of Romans 1:18-32. In a similar way, the justification of God’s name in redemptive history brings the reversal of Romans 1 in Romans 15:7-13. What do we mean by this? The praise of the Gentiles in Romans 15:9-12 seems to be a reversal of their idolatry in Romans 1:18-32. The truth of God in redemptive history (15:8) has reversed their rebellion against the truth of God revealed in natural revelation (1:18). So also it appears that “give thanks to God” repeated twice in Romans 14:6 is a reversal of the Gentiles failure to give thanks to God in Romans 1:21 (in which the Jews are also implicated, Rom. 1:18-2:29). The nations rejected God’s Lordship in natural revelation as the giver of all gifts and the one to whom they are to give account (Rom. 1:32). Now he has saved them by the manifestation of his Lordship in the resurrection of the *Lord* Jesus Christ. Thus, in all things, they now worship God so revealed. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord. This threefold

repetition of observing or doing things “for the Lord” in Romans 14:6 is connected to “giving thanks to God”. Whereas they rebelled against him in all things in Romans 1:18-32, now they worship the Lord in all things through the revelation of his righteousness in Christ Jesus. And God’s acceptance of them is connected to it. This theme of doing things “for the Lord” is so central to Paul in these verses that it is repeated twice again in 14:8, just as the Lordship of Christ is repeated earlier.

In accordance with the semi-eschatological nature of the kingdom, the same Christ who is now Lord and judge of his people will be manifested before the eyes of all in the future eschatological judgment (Rom. 14:11). In this way, the implicit justification of Christ in his resurrection becomes the ground for his future judgment as well (as in Acts 17:31).

### **The Justification of God’s Name: Isaiah 45 and Romans 14**

Paul’s quotation from Isaiah 45 (Rom. 14:11) suggests another connection to the justification of God in redemptive history, which is repeatedly foretold in Isaiah 45 (vv. 5-6, 14, 21, 24). We will look at this theme in Isaiah 45 more fully below. However, let us first raise this question (assuming that Isaiah 45 does refer to the eschatological justification of God’s name)—“By quoting Isaiah 45 with reference to Christ’s future judgment, does Paul imply that God’s righteousness will only be revealed at Christ’s return?” In other words, is it wrong to conclude anything about Christ’s present resurrection life as judge from this quotation? Put more positively, if by this quote Paul suggests that God will justify his name in the future resurrection, does he also thereby suggest that the present life of Christ as judge has its background in the already of God’s justification? We think so, for does not semi-realized eschatology possess the same essential nature as future eschatology? In other words, does not the essential nature of future eschatology intrude into the present in semi-realized eschatology, although it only does so in a semi-realized fashion? Therefore, if Paul quotes a passage from Isaiah 45 to describe the nature of Christ’s future life as judge, does not the justification of God which forms the background for this intrude itself in a semi-realized fashion in Christ’s present life as Lord/Judge? This would fit with how Paul elsewhere in Romans finds the nature of future eschatology intimately related to the nature of its present intrusion. For instance, Paul finds our future “adoption as sons” (Rom. 8:23) semi-realized in our present “adoption as sons” (Rom. 8:15). Thus, when Paul implicitly connects Christ’s future life as judge to the coming justification of God’s name, there is every reason to believe that he connects Christ’s present life as judge to the already of God’s justification.

Let us take a brief look at Isaiah 45 to reinforce our claim that the justification of God’s name is prominent in it. In this chapter, God uses Cyrus (Isa. 45:1) to deliver his people from exile (Isa. 45:13). However, Isaiah’s prophecy also looks beyond the immediate temporal deliverance of Israel. This prophecy ultimately looks ahead to the eschatological reversal of exile. In this eschatological deliverance, God’s people will be brought to their inheritance forever. This deliverance will never be undone. God’s people will never be cast from their inheritance again as Israel was in the exile. This eschatological note is especially indicated in Isaiah 45:17, “Israel has been saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation; you will not be put to shame or humiliated to all eternity.” In this eschatological reversal of exile, God displays his righteousness, justifying his name above all other gods. In delivering his people from the nations, he shows that the gods of the nations (idols) have no power or existence. And having justified his name, he justifies his people *in him* (Isa. 45:25). This theme of the revelation of God’s righteousness and glory above

all gods in his eschatological salvation is clearly found in Isa. 45:5-6, 14, 21, 24. It is reinforced by what we have already noted—Israel’s eschatological justification in him (Isa. 45:25, 17), which is the eschatological reversal of their exile and it’s shame (45:13, 17). That God’s righteousness is manifested above all gods in this eschatological exodus is shown by the words surrounding those Paul quotes from Isaiah 45:23. “There is no other God besides me, a righteous God and a Savior” (Isa. 45:21); and “they will say of me ‘Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength’” (Isa. 45:24). God promised to manifest his righteousness forever by showing himself all-powerful in delivering his people from exile for eternity. And so they would never be put to shame, justified forevermore in his righteousness. For Paul, this has been fulfilled semi-eschatologically in Christ’s death and resurrection and our semi-eschatological justification in him. In this, we have the revelation of God’s righteousness and power above all gods prophesied by Isaiah. Paul even shows this by the way he structures his epistle, from the idolatry of the nations (Rom. 1:18-32) to their praise of the God of hope (Rom. 15: 9-13), who is “the only wise God” (Rom. 16:27).

Yes, there is good reason to believe that Isaiah 45 forms a background to Paul’s claim that this manifestation of God’s righteousness has now been fulfilled in Christ—who has already brought his people to the eschatological inheritance, semi-eschatologically. Thus, even in Romans 14, we find the theme of the kingdom of God and its joy and peace. And leading up to this chapter, Paul lives out of this new exodus, for he is not ashamed to all eternity (Rom. 1:16). This eschatological reversal of exilic shame then leads to the union of Jew and Gentile in Christ (Rom. 10:11-12; 9:33), which forms an essential backdrop to the exhortations of Romans 14—Do not judge one another’s dietary practices. Therefore, as we have seen, there are numerous factors in Romans 14 suggesting that the new manifestation of God’s righteousness in Christ stands behind it.

### **Romans 15:14-33**

Now we will return to the latter half of Romans 15 and from there continue our comments to the end of the letter. In this, we hope to show how the righteousness of God also forms the backdrop for the rest of this epistle. Romans 15:14-33 deals with Paul’s proposed travel plans. Many scholars recognize, as we have noted with Jewett, that Paul probably sends this letter to the Romans, partially in hope of receiving their assistance for his mission in Spain. How then is the theme of the righteousness of God, the justification of God’s name in redemptive history and the semi-eschatological justification of his people in Christ related to this theme of Paul’s mission to Spain?

We believe that Paul intentionally has the note of his mission to Spain follow upon his discussion of the truth of God and, therefore, upon the manifestation of God’s righteousness in redemptive history found in Romans 15:7-13. His mission is in accordance with this revelation in which he wishes his “offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (15:16). His ministry is so that the offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable. This certainly reminds us of Romans 12:1, in which we are to give ourselves as a living sacrifice, acceptable to God. As we have suggested, God has manifested his righteousness in making his people acceptable in his sight. That is, he has manifested his righteousness more fully now that he has more fully manifested the justification and acceptance of his people before his throne. This results in praise among the nations and thus the justification of the Gentiles, making them acceptable through faith as well. Therefore, it seems appropriate for Paul to proclaim the righteousness of God as a suitable message to encourage the Roman church to support him in his mission to Spain, in which he seeks

to identify with God's own redemptive historical act in Jesus Christ and the manifestation of God's own righteousness in redemptive history.

Since the Gentiles will only be an acceptable offering to God in Christ (Rom. 15:16-17; like 12:1) and be sanctified by the eschatological Spirit, Paul can also boast in the things pertaining to God (Rom. 15:17). This is parallel to Romans 3. Just as in Romans 3:25-27, the justification of God's name in redemptive history and the corresponding justification of the Gentiles in Christ (Rom. 15:8-13) results in the boasting of God (Rom. 15:17). For Romans 3:27, after describing the fuller demonstration of God's righteousness that has occurred with the historical accomplishment of Christ's death and the semi-eschatological justification of those who have faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:25-26), Paul asks the question, "Where then is boasting?" A similar connection is found in Romans 5. "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 1). In the fullest sense, Paul speaks here of the semi-eschatological peace that has arrived with the resurrection of Christ. This can be seen in the greater hope that has been given us through the semi-eschatological gift of the Spirit, a theme that begins and ends this section of Romans (e.g. Rom. 5:5; 8: 23, 31-39). This arises from semi-eschatological justification (Rom. 5:1, 8:33). Again, it results in boasting in God alone—"we exult in hope of the glory of God" (5:2). This is followed by Romans 5:11, "we exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ". The pattern of justification excluding boasting in men elsewhere in Romans reinforces our suggestion that Paul's boasting in God (Rom. 15:17) is preceded by justification—both the justification of God's name and the semi-eschatological justification of Jews and Gentiles in him.

Next, Paul discusses his own ministry in preaching the gospel in the power of the Spirit. This has some similarities to Romans 10, in which the greater revelation of the righteousness of God (10:3-4) and in which there is now no distinction between Jew and Greek (10:12) as there was in the old covenant order, is followed by the mission of the preaching of the gospel (10:14-15). And that preaching of the gospel is shown forth as the good news of the kingdom of God through the quotation from Isaiah 52:7, which in context says "our God reigns". Thus, Paul speaks there of the preaching of the kingdom of God, the age in which there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, in which the righteousness of God has been more fully revealed. So also here in Romans 15, it is spoken of the righteousness of God by which the Gentiles might call God the "God of hope" and be acceptable to him through the Holy Spirit. And so he speaks of his ministry of the gospel to the nations. He also ends it with a quote from Isaiah 52, now verse 15. Thus, in both these chapters of Romans, the newness of the revelation of the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ and of the coming of the kingdom (of which Paul is a great herald) ushers forth in the mission of the good news of Jesus Christ to the nations.

Now that that mission has been accomplished in these regions, Paul has reasons to travel on to Rome and then to Spain in the same mission, bringing with him the fullness "of the blessing of Christ". In this section, he is also asking the church to help him in his mission to Jerusalem, in giving material things to the Jews in Judea just as the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things. This expresses the fact that God has accepted both Jew and Gentile together in the new era in Christ Jesus in accordance with Romans 11. This is now expressed in the mission of Paul to Jerusalem by which this union is expressed through the giving of alms to the church there. This is also an expression of union and life with the righteousness of God more fully revealed now. For in it, Jew and Gentile have been equally semi-eschatologically justified in Christ Jesus and made acceptable in his sight. Thus, as Paul had earlier urged the church to accept one another in union

with the God who accepted them (14:1-3), now he hopes that his service for Jerusalem in this offering may be “acceptable to the saints”, that is, the Jewish saints in Jerusalem. This living out of God’s acceptance of his people—living in revelation of the manifestation of the righteousness of God—is a process in this semi-eschatological era. Therefore, it is necessary for the church to pray to God that the apostle may be delivered to carry out his message and that his service would be acceptable to the saints in Jerusalem (15:30-31). This is life in the kingdom of God, in which there is joy (14:17; 15:10, 13); and so Paul wishes to come to Rome and the Roman Christians in joy by the “will of God”. (Does this bring us back to the “will of God” in 12:2?) Thus, this section closes (15:32). That this section finds its background in the justification of God in redemptive history is confirmed by the conclusion in 15:33 where Paul uses the “God of” language once again. “Now may the God of peace be with you all. Amen.” This brings us back to Romans 15:13 “now may the God of hope”, followed by joy and peace. And we have joy followed by peace in 15:32-33. This “God of” language with joy and peace (15:13 and 15:33) appears to form an inclusio. Such language does express the revelation of the righteousness of God in redemptive history and the joy and peace that results. It is thus connected to his kingdom. So that which falls in between is once again related to this revelation of the righteousness of God in redemptive history.

### **Romans 16**

We will not comment much on the greetings in chapter 16. However, we believe that they are an indication of the acceptance that God has made of his people. We are called in Christ to accept one another, and so Paul is revealing his acceptance of the saints in Rome, his joy and peace in them reflecting the revelation of the righteousness of God. Thus he greets those in the church in Rome, expressing in many cases words of appreciation for each of them. That is, his words describing the other saints are words of encouragement building them up in Christ, just as he had exhorted the church to build up and not tear down the work of God in Romans 14. It has also been noted that many who are greeted here are women, and thus Paul has given them a high standing—the standing they deserve in Christ, a standing which they did not have in the Roman Empire.

In chapter 16, the greeting section (16:1-16) is followed by the exhortation to avoid those who “cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you have learned” (16:17). This suggests that the greetings have to do positively with the teaching Paul has given to the church already of the union of Jew and Gentile in Christ. This is further reinforced by the fact that the section beginning 16:17 ends with 16:20, the “God of peace”. In this way Romans 16:1-16 presents the positive presentation of greeting the saints because of their union in Christ contrasted with the opposite, causing dissensions (16:17-20). Therefore the positive section and its negative counterpart are enclosed within the note of “the God of peace” (15:33; 16:20). This indicates that they are to be understood within the context of the justification of God’s name in redemptive history insofar as he has manifested himself more fully now as the God of peace and will therefore manifest himself in that way in the future eschatological resurrection. Thus, Romans 15:33 presents us with the already of the God of peace while 16:20 presents us with the fact that God who is now a God of peace will manifest this even more fully in the day when he crushes Satan under the feet of the church in Christ. The present manifestation of the righteousness of God in Christ is a semi-eschatological intrusion of the future manifestation of God’s righteousness at the end of the world. And on the flip side, the manifestation of God’s righteousness that has now occurred in redemptive history works itself out in the already and the not yet. The life of the church in union with Christ and one another is enclosed within God as he has manifested himself as the



God of peace in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Even the greetings that Paul gives from his fellow workers are folded within the glorification of God's name (16:21-23) as they are enclosed within the justification of God's name in redemptive history (16:20; 16:25-27).

The closing verses of this letter (16:25-27) are a fitting conclusion to this epistle, giving us additional theological reason to believe they are not added by a later redactor. They unveil the revelation of the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus and sum it up. In so doing, they often bring us all the way back to the introduction of this epistle and its themes—themes drawn out throughout this letter that are central to the end.

### **The Conclusion to Paul's Letter to the Romans**

Behind Romans 16:25-27 stands the revelation of the righteousness of God and the justification of his people in Christ now fully manifest in the last days. This is seen by the unveiling of the power of God which begins and ends this section. "Power of God" had been connected to the "righteousness of God" in the thesis of this letter—"for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed" (Rom. 1:16-17). Paul speaks forth the power of God in the conclusion of his letter when he says, "to him who is able to establish you according to my gospel" (16:25). "To him who is able" displays God's power. "To establish you" brings us back also to Romans 1: "that you may be established" (v. 11). The power and greatness of God is also revealed at the end of this conclusion, showing his greatness above all other gods, who are only so-called gods. Thus, Paul says "to the only wise God" (16:27). He has shown himself in redemptive history to be the only wise God. While the nations taunted God as weak and therefore (by implication) not wise in his dealings, God has now shown himself to be the only wise God through Jesus Christ. That is why to him alone belongs "glory for ever more" (16:27). This wisdom of God was displayed in the entirety of his mercy revealed in Romans 1-11, while nonetheless still remaining unfathomable and awe-inspiring. "Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable his ways!" (11:33). And this mercy in Romans 1-11 is connected to God's righteousness. Thus, the wisdom of God is mysteriously displayed in the righteous mercy of God which is central to this letter. It shows him to be most wise over all for "who became his counselor?" (11:34). It shows him to be the beginning and end both of creation and of grace in contrast to the idols of the nations in Romans 1:18-32. "For from him and through him and to him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). Thus, one is to give thanks to him alone, the provider of all things not to idols, in contrast to Romans 1:21. Here Paul says "to him be the glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36), very similarly to Romans 16:27. In this, he reverses the rebellious reversal, in which the nations had "exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God" for idols (Rom. 1:23). God has undone the gods of the nations through Jesus Christ. Our suggestion for Romans 16:27 is that God has shown himself in redemptive history to be the most wise God in the demonstration of his righteousness. Here we are suggesting that the parallel of Romans 11:33-36, which is a crescendo of the righteousness of God, further supports this.

In between the revelation of the power and wisdom of God in Romans 16:25 and 27 is found the gospel of Christ—put in redemptive historical terms, leading to the obedience of faith among all the nations (16:26). Thus, the fact that God is the only wise God has caused the nations to praise and glorify him and throw away their idols. That is, the fact that God has manifested himself in

redemptive history as the only wise God made him known to all the nations as such, leading to the obedience of faith.

The redemptive historical focus here is clearly seen in the “revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested” (16:25-26). This reminds us of the “but now” of Romans 3:21 and places the power and wisdom of God and its manifestation within a redemptive historical context. Thus reiterates our suggestion that the revelation of the righteousness of God in Christ is a further manifestation of God’s own righteousness which is connected to his power. Behind this also is the semi-eschatological justification (now common in Christ) as the ground for Paul of the union of Jew and Gentile alike in Christ, so that the nations come to the obedience of faith.

Paul’s reference to the “Scriptures of the prophets” (v. 26) also reminds us of the beginning of this epistle “which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures” (Rom. 1:2). Again it is the gospel promised by the prophets—therefore the revelation of the good news as it has been more fully manifested now at this time in redemptive history in fulfillment of the prophetic promises. This is the gospel of the good news of the kingdom of God. As such, it is according to his Son, the descendant of King David (Rom. 1:3). And here again, as with the conclusion of this letter, we find that this leads to the “obedience of faith among all the nations” (Rom. 1:5). It also is “for his name’s sake” (1:5) just like Romans 16:27—to his “glory”. Here it is not only the righteousness of God revealed that brings the obedience of faith among the nations; but also, his supernatural power is necessary for their regeneration and justification—leading to the praise of his righteousness, glory and power in their salvation.

In both the beginning and end of this epistle, we have the gospel (1:1; 16:25) with its redemptive historical orientation. This again reinforces the fact that the gospel of which Paul is not ashamed (1:16, Paul’s thesis) is the fullness of the revelation of the power and righteousness of God. All of this is focused on the actual accomplishment in redemptive history of Christ’s incarnation (born of the seed of David), life (Rom. 5), death and resurrection. And it is also manifested in the continual reign of God through the heralds of the kingdom by the power of the Spirit leading to the obedience of faith among all the nations. It further looks ahead to the fullness of good news in the glorification of the saints (Rom. 8). In this way, God displays his power—keeping his people with him in Christ in the Spirit—eschatologically secure in his own life for evermore—he surely shows himself to be the glorious God. He displays his glory as the one who is all-powerful, all-righteous, and all-truth in his promises. In this, he unveils heaven itself, the abode of his eternal power, righteousness, wisdom and knowledge and invites his church into this glory forevermore. They may now know him and live in his power and righteousness—eschatologically justified in Christ Jesus their risen King forevermore.

### **Romans 13 in Context: Briefly**

While we do not have space to deal adequately with Romans 13, let us make a few parting comments with respect to it, understood in its context. Romans 13 must be interpreted in the light of the greater manifestation of the righteousness of God at this point in redemptive history because it stands between Romans 1-12 and 14-16, all of which are grounded in the righteousness of God. Romans 13 is also preceded by the words of Romans 12:17-18, “respect what is right in the sight of all men” and “be at peace with all men”. In this way, the theme of “peace” also surrounds the chapter. It would appear that one way in which Christians are to live out their lives in the kingdom

of peace (Rom. 14:17) and in that peace (Rom. 15:13) which accords with the “God of peace” (Rom. 15:33) is to live at peace with all men as far as they are able.

Some Christians (not Jewett) argue that Romans 13 supports the idea that the state as a minister of God (Rom. 13:4) must execute all the penalties of the Mosaic covenant. This is at odds with the context of this passage. To insist that the state impose the unique penalties of the Mosaic covenant in the new covenant era is to insist that Christians are under the curse of the law. If the state places Christians under the curse of the law, they are not working as ministers of God—the God who has now brought the greater (semi-eschatological) manifestation of justification in redemptive history<sup>9</sup>. However, if the state were to recognize the semi-eschatological justification of Christians and exempt them from the unique penalties of the Mosaic covenant, but were still to enforce those penalties on their non-Christian neighbors, Christians would never be at peace with all men. This would create a form of injustice in which a non-Christian would be executed for committing adultery, but a Christian would not. This would be obvious to non-Christians and would create an environment in which peace between Christians and non-Christians would be structurally impossible. Therefore, if Christians are exempt from the curse of the law (and therefore its unique penalties), something of this must extend to their non-Christian neighbors if they are to live at peace with them. In the external arena of the state, these non-Christians must be exempted from the unique penalties of the Mosaic covenant. However, they are truly under the curse of God and will experience the unleashing of his wrath at the end of the world if they do not repent. The only way they experience God’s wrath through the state now is when they commit crimes for which Christians would also be punished. Thus, if they do evil to a Christian (Rom. 12:17, persecute?) by physically injuring or killing him/her, they can be punished by the state (Rom. 12:19; 13:4), but only because all physical assault and murder<sup>10</sup> is punishable by the law, no matter who commits it.

### **Conclusion to Our Review**

While we briefly summarized Jewett’s thoughts on Romans 13-16 in this third part of our review, we have admittedly spent more time considering the reviewer’s own reflections on these chapters. Nonetheless, in this way, we have indirectly criticized Jewett’s overall flat eschatology, oriented towards the present world. In this, he follows a very contemporary cultural agenda. We have suggested an alternative eschatological perspective we think is more in keeping with the message of the apostle Paul.

But this does not distract entirely from the usefulness of this commentary, especially in terms of some of the structural and rhetorical suggestions that Jewett makes along with some of the very helpful historical background that he provides. In fact, if we were to critique our own suggestions on Romans 13-16, it would be that we have not done these justice. Thus, we believe that in the spirit of mining out gold among dross and purifying what others have done before us (which hopefully even later readers will do with this reviewer’s own reflections on this epistle), ministers

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<sup>9</sup>Are we arguing that rulers in the state are only serving Christians in this way when they are self-consciously aware that they are doing so? No. As long as they are making and enforcing laws within a framework that is basically consistent with the Christian’s semi-eschatological justification, they are serving the Christian.

<sup>10</sup>The penalty of execution for murder is not unique to the Mosaic covenant, but was found previously in Genesis 9:6.

of the gospel (with accrued critical reflection of Jewett's own critical methods) may gain new insights and stimulation in their own reflections upon the text. While we fear that Jewett's flat eschatology will simply reinforce and extend the horizontal cultural agenda of this age, we pray (by the power of him who has justified his name) that its benefits rather than shortcomings will finally be most influential upon the church.

## Review

*K:JNWTS* 32/1 (May2017): 53-55

Bruce W. Winter, *Divine Honours for the Caesars: The First Christians' Responses*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2015. 348pp. Paper. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7257-9. \$35.00.

It is no secret that the Roman emperors from Augustus Caesar on regarded themselves as gods on earth (this book is a full review of this religio-political myth of fabricated superstition). It is no secret that the emperors were worshipped as gods on earth by members of their cult, i.e., citizens of the empire (this book is a full review of the idolatry and vanity of the mythic superstition which imposed itself on an empire hungry for gods in human, marble and metallic form). It is no secret that the emperors were portrayed as gods on earth with statues, images, festivals, sacrifices and worship celebrations (this book is a full review of the cult worshipping idolaters practicing homage and obeisance to the emperor). Winter has detailed the reciprocal aspects of the divine cult in the Roman empire in reflexive mirror paradigm. What the emperor claimed of divinity was mirrored in the divine honors paid to him by his culture/citizens/ethos/imperium/devotees. The pattern was quite simple: (Emperor) I am god and I will be revered as such. Matched by the dutiful reciprocal: (People) You are god and we will revere you as such.

The tyranny of such arrogance is patent, while the groveling lackey mentality of the reciprocal is even more patent. Serfs are no more wretched than when they regard their rulers as divine messiahs and fawn before them in abject humiliation (perhaps with tingles running up their legs in those olden days). The inevitable end of the narrative is the same as the end of the story of the Roman empire: god-on-earth tyranny and self-destruction by the cultic devotees produces the death of both. Cult of ruler mirrors ruled as slaves of the ruler cult which is the policy of the death-wish.

This generated a crisis for early Christians of the first century A.D. Jews received a free pass by offering daily sacrifices *for* the safety of the emperor (not sacrifices *to* the emperor) in the Temple at Jerusalem (all of which ceased with the Jewish revolt of 66 A.D.). Winter explores the response of Christians who were conscience bound in loyalty to Christ and not to Caesar nor his imperious ilk.

After reviewing the 'messianic' (his word) ages of Augustus and Nero, Winter sums up the activities of imperial veneration in the East (Asia) (pp. 48ff). He translates Greek and Latin inscriptions with other records of deification. He cites material from temples erected to the emperor as to a god. Offerings are made to their images and statues by cultic priests and worshippers. All to promote and indoctrinate via a state cult-machine deifying one person—the imperial magnate—as very god on earth. Man and state = true god; all else = servile and sycophantic abjection and adulation.

Conformity was the expected (yeah, demanded) response. Expressed via making offerings to the emperor, bowing in worship to the emperor, making prayers to the emperor, expressing devotion for the emperor—all this was reciprocal, tit for tat. He is a god and does god-like things for you and the empire. You do things in turn to honor the god, secure his favor and preserve his benevolence through your works/deeds/acts of devotion, fidelity, homage, belief. Your worldview

reciprocates his worldview or you suffer. Even where there is apparent hesitation, it is judged clouted expediency, i.e., simply stalling the inevitable full endorsement of divinity in the more ‘backward’ regions of the empire. These were eventually transformed to conform with the new epiphanies from the imperial person and his professional handlers. As chapter 4 points out, duplicity/deceit/lying was essential to advance this ‘divine’ tyranny.

Chapter 6 details the imperial cult at Athens. Here, Winter reviews Paul’s apologia on Mars Hill (Acts 17:23-34). For those interested in his Areopagus address, cf. pp. 143-48 and 156-65. His contention that Paul is using themes of general or natural revelation at the Areopagus will be of interest to all parties with a vested interest in the topic.

Details of the emperor cult at Corinth/Achaea follows in chapter 7. Our author notes that Christians were given “*de facto* cultic exemption” (192) because Gallio declared them “to be *de facto* a Jewish gathering” (195) with the same exemption which applied to Judaism. Winter details the compromises of some of the Christians after Paul’s departure (chapter 8). Paul’s response (1 Cor 8-11) is carefully examined with instructive exegesis relative to implications of the imperial cult.

Chapter 9 examines the strategy for Galatian Christians to avoid granting divine honor to the emperor. Winter focuses on the practice of circumcision among Gentile Christians in this region (232ff.), i.e., that it was mandatory for Gentile Christians to be circumcised (Gal 6:12). Why would Gentiles in Asia Minor submit to this? Because they would be recognized legally as “distinctly Jewish” (241) and thus endorsed as part of a *religio licita* (“legal religion”). Consequently, they avoided the necessity of paying divine devotion to the emperor cult. The result was the marginalization of uncircumcised Gentile Christians, as Gal 4:17 suggests (241-42). Gal 6:12 supports this reconstruction—the Galatian Christians did this solely in order not to be prosecuted for the cross of Christ, i.e., to avoid honors paid to the emperor cult which all segments of Roman imperial culture were required to do (Jews alone exempted).

Chapter 10 treats Thessalonica. Paul was accused of promoting another king (Jesus Christ) besides Caesar (Acts 17:3, 7). According to 1 Thess 1:9, the Thessalonian Christians stopped giving divine honors to the emperor and his cult and turned “to serve a living and true God.” The consequences were “persecutions and afflictions” (2 Thess 1:4) and “suffering” (2 Thess 1:5). They refused and were abused for so doing.

Chapter 11 carries Winter’s theory of potential exile for Christians per the epistle to the Hebrews. In fact, Winter portrays Hebrews as a subtle polemic against the entire emperor priest-craft notion of the tyrannical Roman imperial state. This is an interesting if unpersuasive suggestion as it reduces the epistle to a politico-cultural tract and thereby completely misses the eschatological pilgrim motif dominating the letter (cf. here: <http://kerux.com/doc/2602A3.asp>). Winter notes the sufferings of Heb 10:32-34 and catalogues them as imposed by Roman law. He then argues that 13:12 (“outside the gate”) means physical exile or legal banishment. This seems problematic to this reviewer as it constructs a case on a metaphor—a metaphorical case which collapses on closer examination. NB: the displacement and replacement motif of NT Christianity supersedes both Judaism and paganism—the Hebrews Christians stand outside both cultures as Christ himself stands outside both.

Winter's final chapter is a speculative exercise in Hebrew and Greek gematria by which he attempts to justify his preterist opinions about the book of Revelation.

We step back from this instructive volume schooled in the Roman imperial reality. An omnipotent, single person with a single party line and a single narrative (construct) state whose leader is, in fact, a god. The god's pals and gals are untouchable because they too are brushed with the aura of divine oracles. The narrative spun by the god and his pals and gals is woven seamlessly from divinity to humanity so that the humanity of the story is always subject to the divinity of the god on earth and his/her lackeys.

This, of course, is tyranny—intolerant, oppressive, crushing tyranny. And the end of tyranny past and present is mirrored in the end of the Roman imperium. Foreign aliens destroyed the empire showing the god on earth that he was a fake and a liar (impotent and incompetent to boot); showing the cadres of the man-'god' that they were no match for the narrative of conquest, terror, rape, pillage, bloody death. So much for the ruler god; so much for his worshipful devotees; so much for the narrative fabricated to promote the man and the myth. Death and destruction inevitably follows such hubris, vanity, idolatry, sophistry, mendacity, treachery, brutality, idiocy!

Christianity has no such myth and is the only salvation from such benighted stupidity. In Christ is a true God-man; a true divine person worthy to be worshipped and adored; a true ruler of a kingdom which can never be attacked; nor can any of its subjects and inhabitants be put to death by alien forces of evil because the divine Son of God is an omnipotent Savior "to the uttermost" (Heb 7:25, KJV).

A typo and a suggestion. Page 73 reverses the Colossian proof-texts, i.e., 1:17 should be 1:27 and 1:27 should be 1:17. I could not locate an abbreviation table for the plethora of primary Latin and Greek documents which Winter mines. This amazing body of research remains inaccessible to the reader because there is no table of abbreviations which identifies these initialisms (e.g., RPC, IG, etc. with full bibliographic information). True, one can search the internet for the full titles, but as an aid to the reader, the author and the publisher should have furnished this full disclosure information in a handy "table of abbreviations" as is customarily done with scholarly publications at the beginning or end of a book.

—James T. Dennison, Jr.