

## **Chapter two. Paul and the prophets.**

### **Isaiah and the theology of Paul.**

We have seen that the prophets predictions of a New Exodus had a powerful influence on the NT writers. Both Jesus and John the Baptist understood their own ministries in the light of this expectation. The material listed in chapter one concerning the predictions of a New Exodus show that the major contributor to this expectation was the prophet Isaiah. In this chapter I will seek to show that Paul was immersed in this OT stream of expectations and that it was a powerful influence on how he interpreted the life death and resurrection of Jesus. The influence of the prophecy of Isaiah on the thinking of the apostle Paul has already been noted.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it can be shown that many of the major doctrines of Paul are found in embryonic form in the book of Isaiah.

Paul not only quoted from Isaiah many more times than all of the other prophets put together, but he actually used the prophet's writings as the skeleton of his gospel. He took the quotations and arranged them in such a way as to outline the history of salvation, from the fall of man to the eventual establishment of the messianic kingdom. Around these quotations he built his argument. The full import of this fact is only appreciated when the quotations are listed in the order they are used and read in that same sequence. What it shows is that if the letter is laid out as a continuous papyrus, and the citations from Isaiah were raised out of the text and suspended at their point of use, those texts, in that order, summarise the whole of salvation history. Such a pattern could not be anything but intentional.

### **The cited texts of Romans.**

We follow the Isianic texts Paul cited in the order that he used them.

“As it is written ‘God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you’” Rom 2:24: Isa 52:5 (LXX).

“Their feet are swift to shed blood: ruin and misery mark their paths and the way of peace they have not known”. Rom 3:15-17: Isa 59:7-8.

“Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: ‘Though the number of the Israelites should be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality’. It is just as Isaiah had said previously”. Rom 9:27-28: Isa 10:22-23 (LXX).

“Just as Isaiah said previously, ‘Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been like Gomorrah’”. Rom 9:29; Isa 1:9 (LXX).

“As it is written, ‘See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall’.” Rom 9:33a; Isa 8:14.

“and ‘the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame’”. Rom 9:33; Isa 28:16 (LXX).

“As the Scripture says. ‘He who believes in him will not be disappointed.’” Rom 10:11; Isa 52:7 (LXX).

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<sup>1</sup> See Denny *Significance* 1ff.

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“As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”. Rom 10:15; Isa 52:7.

“For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our message’”? Rom 10:16; Isa 53:1. (LXX).

“And Isaiah boldly says, ‘I was found by those who did not seek me, I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me’”. Rom 10:20; Isa 29:10. (LXX).

“What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not attain, but the elect did. The others were hardened as it is written: ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day’”. Rom 11:7-8; Isa 29:10.

“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, ‘there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins’”. Rom 11:26-27; Isa 59:20-21 (LXX).

“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor”. Rom 11:34; Isa 40:13 (LXX).

“For it is written, ‘As I live, sayeth the Lord’”. Rom 14:11a; Isa 49:18.

“Every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God”. Rom 14:11b; Isa 45:23 (LXX).

“And again, Isaiah says, ‘The root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him’”. Rom 15:12; Isa 11:10 (LXX).

“Rather, as it is written, ‘Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand’”. Rom 15:21; Isa 52:15 (LXX).

These passages show the perspective which Paul had in regard to salvation history. It was that of the evangelical prophet. The quotations work systematically through the various stages of the development of the purposes of God in the salvation of Mankind.

Israel has not responded to her calling, she has acted like the other nations. Rom 2:24; Isa 52:5; Rom 3:15-17; Isa 59:7-8.

God's purpose is to show his faithfulness to his promises by saving a remnant. Rom 9:27-29; Isa 10:22-23.

God will appoint a saviour, for both Jews and Gentiles. Rom 9:33; Isa 8:14; 28:16; Rom 10:11; Isa 8:16.

Notice how Paul stresses the universality of Christ's salvation as he follows up the quotation of Isa 28:16 with: “For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’”.

Paul then goes on to speak of the church's responsibility to declare the salvation of God, as it had been fulfilled by the remnant in the previous age. Rom 10:15; Isa 52:7.

But there would be the same response of unbelief to the gospel message. Rom 10:16; Isa 53:1.

Even so, the electing purposes of God would not be overturned by the sinfulness of Man. What he purposes he will achieve. Rom 10:22; Isa 65:1; Rom 10:21; Isa 65:2; Rom 11:8; Isa 29:10.

God's purposes will be fulfilled, and all Israel, as Paul has already defined her (Rom.4:11-12), will be saved. Rom 11:26-27; Isa 59:20-21.

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All of this is beyond man's design, it is of God alone. Rom 11:33-34; Isa 40:13.

The salvation promised to Abraham, in which the nations are to share in the covenant blessings, will finally be fulfilled. Those who were never part of the people of God have come into the eschatological community. Rom 15:21; Isaiah 52:15.

### **Interdependence.**

This dependency upon Isaiah must not obscure the fact that the New Exodus theme was not the sole possession of 'the evangelical prophet'. It was shared widely by both pre-exilic, exilic and post exilic prophets. Because of this, themes which are more prominent in other prophets could be interwoven into the material received from Isaiah without in any way reducing the perspective of the New Exodus.

We can see from the above analysis of the use of Isaiah in Romans that there is no haphazard use of the prophets writings.<sup>2</sup> The mathematical chances of these texts used in this particular order happening by accident is enormous. It is beyond reason to reject that they were deliberately used by Paul as his structure. In other words, Paul does not simply use the prophecy of Isaiah, he depends on it. His reasoning and exposition of the good news of Jesus is arranged around this structure. This is for the simple reason that Jesus is the fulfillment of all that the prophets had been saying. Jesus is the son of David, he is the deliverer of his people. We are going to see that this is the foundation of all that Paul argues for.<sup>3</sup>

### **The context of Paul's letters.**

It is not enough to gather related texts on a particular subject to understand Paul's teaching on a particular matter. The circumstances of each letter will determine how it was read. If Paul was responding to a crisis situation, then his style and content would no doubt be different than if he wrote on the same subject to a church not facing the same crisis. In a crisis situation he might stress details that ordinarily would only be one of a number of threads in the understanding. Galatians was clearly written in a theological crisis while the way that Romans was written suggests that Paul handles the same material in a more reflective way. Romans was written in a far less critical situation and this is reflected in the tone of its arguments. In interpreting passages we need to be sensitive as to the way the congregation originally heard it and the significance that statements would have had in the situation it was written to. To overlook this can cause us to give prominence to statements that ought not to be given special attention.

There are many possible reasons for Paul writing to the churches. Normally it was because there were pastoral problems which had to be addressed. These problems had their root, as is so often the case, in theological confusion. Not until these theological problems had been unraveled could the pastoral difficulties be resolved. But what were these problems? Is it possible to

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<sup>2</sup> Not, as Longenecker, "Prolegoma" 151, who claimed that Paul cited OT texts to make links between himself and the Jewish tradition that the Roman gentile believers had accepted from their Jewish evangelizers. For the individual use of texts from Isaiah as used in Romans see Shum, *Isaiah*, passim.

<sup>3</sup> See especially my forthcoming volume *Paul and the Spirit*.

discern them from the content of the letters? Indeed it needs to be asked how Paul came to be aware of problems in churches that he had never visited. Some of these congregations were on the other side of the world as far as the geography and the transportation of the day was concerned.

Obviously, it could be argued that the church or some of her members had informed Paul of the problems, like as happened concerning the problems at Corinth.<sup>4</sup> In this case Paul could address the problems directly and knowledgeably. It would be convenient if we could assume Paul had similar knowledge about other congregations through the same means. However unless the letter indicates that he had received this information it is a dangerous to make such a blind assumption. It assumes that Paul had details of the circumstances of the church's life that he might not have had. This in turn presuppose that the exact situation in the church is reflected in Paul's instructions.

### **Common problems.**

But Paul might be ignorant of the precise needs of the church, all he might be doing is giving general advice on a range of issues that he knows are likely to be raised in one form or another. If we proceed with the assumption that Paul knew the church's situation then we will look for the exact matching of detail rather than appreciating that Paul is not speaking to the particular but he is only instructing them with broad brush strokes.

Most scholars assume that Paul had detailed information about the churches he wrote too. The themes of letters are carefully examined and traces of conflict are sought for what might give the clues needed for a proper understanding. What is so often overlooked is the wider church and the problems that it had. It is possible that Paul anticipated that the Romans, for example, would eventually be afflicted by the same problems that the Corinthians or the Galatians were experiencing. This provides us with a realistic situation in which to read the letter. We are not presupposing exact prescriptions for existing problems, but that we are reading teaching that is intended to protect them from the 'infections' that would certainly visit them!

Naturally the wider problems of the church cannot be presumed to be those being dealt by the letter to the Roman church, but they certainly should not be ignored. There were certainly opponents of Paul traveling around the churches trying to win converts to their legalistic understanding. Paul was acutely aware of this fact. What would be a sensible method is to see if the problems that are so readily identified in the wider church match the remedies that Paul prescribed in his letters to churches he did not know personally. If they do match, then a careful listening may tell us if Paul knew detail, or if he is only anticipating their eventual experience of the problems. Whatever the situation, the prescription is in the form of theological debate and practical application. It is these issues that we must carefully examine.

### **Circumcision and the gentiles.**

The problems of the Corinthian and Galatian churches, and indeed of Gentile Christianity itself, was that they were having major difficulties in their

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1 Cor. 1:11.

relationships with their Jewish Christian brothers. There were many sincere Jewish believers in Christ who could not square acceptance of the Gentiles into the covenant without them having gone through the initiation of circumcision. This effected virtually every church. Judiazers were roaming the empire to persuade the converts of Paul's mission that there was a final step that they still had to take. This, they argued, was circumcision. They claimed that this alone would bring Gentiles into the full grace of the covenant.

But there was also a far less noble side to this conflict. Many Jewish believers were seriously intimidated by the growing number of Gentiles entering the church. The presence of few might have been sufficient to make them feel good that the superiority of the Jewish faith had at long last been recognised. But to see these numbers growing, and especially in Rome where the Jewish numbers suddenly dropped as a result of the edict by Nero, left the Jewish Messianic believers a vulnerable minority. They could no longer set the agenda and give the lead to the gentile converts. It was increasingly these 'bastard' son's of Abraham that were claiming the right to discern the will of God in key issues of faith and practice.<sup>5</sup> There was only one solution to this most serious situation, and that was to demand that the law required the gentiles be circumcised. Such a master stroke gave the power back to the 'pure' minority, but betrayed the very essence of the gospel. Thus the circumcision issue was a later development and came from a rear guard defensive manoeuvre to save the Jewish veto in the church. We shall see in chapter 9 that many scholars have failed to recognise the steps of this development and have finished up wrongly saying that Saul persecution of the Hellenists was over the circumcision issue.

In other words, circumcision was the issue that was threatening to split the young church. There was a real danger that the umbilical cord would be cut and a permanent separation take place between the Christian Gentiles church and its Jewish 'Christian' mother. For Paul this would have been disastrous. There was only one body and only one Lord who dealt with all on the same grounds of grace. The Pauline letters show Paul struggling to maintain the relationship between the two communities, a relationship that was costly in the extreme for Paul to advocate. The Acts of the Apostles documents the energy and time that Paul spent trying to keep the doors of communication and fellowship open.<sup>6</sup> Two time consuming visits to Jerusalem, when he had many other pressing matters to attend to, is evidence of the importance of the relationship. His first visit<sup>7</sup> was to allow the apostles to examine his ministry. The second<sup>8</sup> was to take a gift from the Gentile churches to the poor in the Jerusalem church. There are scholars who see this substantial gift as an attempt at removing Jewish Christian suspicion over the Gentile churches. Others see that the reason for the visit was that Paul wanted to lead a Gentile team with gifts into Jerusalem as a fulfillment of prophecy. Zechariah had predicted that Gentiles would come to Jerusalem to offer their praise and

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<sup>5</sup> Cosgrove, "Other", 624.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 15:1-2; 21:17-26.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 15:1-4.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 21:17-19 cf Rom. 15:25-29.

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sacrifices to God.<sup>9</sup>

These two problems, both essentially about the Gentile Jewish relationship as members of the covenant community, are found in Paul's theology of salvation. In the letter to the Romans we find a remarkable fit with this theology and practice that Paul advocates.<sup>10</sup> The first eleven chapters are essentially about the way God has dealt with the Jews. It considers their privileges and how they were uncircumcised when God accepted them. So again, reasons Paul, God is following the same path in accepting uncircumcised Gentiles. In other words, Paul is stressing the Biblical evidence that the Gentiles are being brought into the covenant in exactly the same way as the Jews had. He spells out how their representative, their father Abraham, was accepted.

Paul regularly makes the point that the redemption from Egypt was only a type of the salvation that was going to be accomplished in the last days.<sup>11</sup> Being part of the original deliverance did not mean that their salvation was complete. It pointed to a far greater act of salvation. To claim superiority because of the deliverance from Egypt, and not to appreciate its "trivialness" in comparison with the salvation which all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, now shared through Christ was folly indeed.

This tension, of being treated as second class citizens of the kingdom, provoked the Gentiles to respond to the Jews. Some Gentile believers were goading the Jews that they had displaced them and that God no longer had any purpose for his ancient people in His redemptive plans. Their argument was self evident. The numbers of Gentiles that were coming into the church was clearly shifting the balance of its composition.<sup>12</sup> Such tensions had to be resolved, not least because they were members of the one body and belonged to the same Lord.

### **Meat and idols.**

In the midst of these theological debates over who had priority was a very practical problem. This came from the society in which the Gentiles had been converted and in which they still lived. Before their conversion they had worshipped in the temples of the local gods. Often these temples were centres of social activity and the gods were seen as patrons of various trade guilds. When a man was converted, he naturally stopped attending the temple. Sometimes it cost him dearly, for he could no longer be involved in the guild his trade operated under. His conversion could literally cost him his livelihood.

But even though he no longer visited the temple, the snares of the temple met him on the very streets that they walked. After the temple sacrifices had been made, the meat was sold to local butchers for resale to the public. For the Jewish Christian this was no problem. With their strong background of

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<sup>9</sup> Zech. 14:16.

<sup>10</sup> See Namos, *Mystery*, passim and Chae *Apostle*, passim.

<sup>11</sup> Rom. 3:21ff, 8:1-3, 9:30-33, 11:25-27; 1 Cor. 10:1-4.

<sup>12</sup> Cosgrove, "Other", 621 says: "Jewish Christians are also a minority within Gentile-dominated Roman Christianity and one can only conclude that whatever their prejudices toward the gentiles, these do not carry equal psycho-social weight with those of the gentile Christians toward them."

monotheism they knew that the idols had no real existence.<sup>13</sup> They were merely the product of the darkened imaginations of men. They did not believe in the existence of the gods that were worshipped in the temple, so why shouldn't they eat the meat providing that it was *kosher*? The fact that it had been offered to a god that didn't exist meant that the problem didn't exist either. In practice few Jews would want or need to eat this meat. They would have continued to eat their *kosher* meat which was probably outside of the price range that most of the gentile Christians could afford.

### **Christian freedom and responsibility.**

But such an example of indifference to the meat's origin was a real problem for those who had lived in the fear of the existence of these gods. While the Gentile converts knew these facts, they could not easily shake off the memory with its lingering influences of the things that had so deeply effected them. The sacrifices had been about involvement in something evil and Satanic. Even if the deities didn't exist, this didn't change the fact that there was a kingdom of darkness and evil that had exploited their ignorance and fear. For the Gentile converts there was real concern of being linked with anything that happened in the pagan temples. It was a link that they feared would be the cause of compromise and the means that Satan would use to take control of them once again.

The meat had associations that they couldn't shake off and it caused them such deep distress. That some Gentile Christians were being won over to the Jewish argument and boasted in their superior knowledge made Jewish/Gentile tensions even worse. Such 'successes' by the Jewish section no doubt gave great satisfaction, but the cost of this power game was that some Gentile believers were overtaken with confusion and their faith was wrecked. We get insights into this happening at Corinth<sup>14</sup> and in Colossae<sup>15</sup> as well as in the Asian churches.<sup>16</sup>

Now these were clearly the common problems of Jewish/Gentile relations in the churches. Indeed, because of the intense loyalty of the Jewish community to the law of Moses, it was inevitable that these problems would arise. Wherever the two communities were in coexistence, and they certainly coexisted in the church, these sort of religious differences would be highlighted.

The letter to the Romans was not an attempt to guess at their problems, nor was it a mere opportunity that Paul took to explain his gospel. It was an attempt to keep the two communities together, bearing a common witness to the Lord who had saved them. The letter demonstrates Paul's keen theological and pastoral awareness as he writes a meaningful letter in which the Jewish/Gentile relationship is frankly faced. He exposes the pastoral problems that the integration of the two communities produce and deals with them head on. He reminded them that they had been brought together as a result of the middle wall of perdition having been removed.<sup>17</sup> They might be

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Cor. 8:4-7.

<sup>14</sup> 1Cor. 8:9-13.

<sup>15</sup> Col. 2:16-19

<sup>16</sup> Rev. 2:2:20-22. Note that this threat is for eating food sacrificed to idols.

<sup>17</sup> Eph. 2:14.

one new man in Christ,<sup>18</sup> but the new man was also a man at war with itself.

### **Missionary necessity.**

It was only from a united church that Paul could effectively embark on his mission to Spain. He was only too aware of what it meant to be distracted from the task of evangelism. Existing divisions in his supporting churches had taught him these painful lessons. The gospel was not about casting the Jews off in favour of the Gentiles, but about bringing both into the eschatological covenant community. It was only as they accepted each other and lived as the new man that the nations would take note of what God was doing in Christ. They were to be living evidence that God was reconciling enemies to each other and to Himself. Their unity was vital to the mission of Paul.

### **The corporate setting of Paul's letters.**

In attempting to locate the Jewish mind set of Paul, we need to be careful that he is not inadvertently isolated from the corporate mindset that is foundational to the whole OT. It is all too easy to forget that Paul was a devout Jew long before he responded to the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah. But even then, after he responded, he neither deliberately nor subconsciously rejected his heritage. One of the features of that heritage was to gather to hear the scriptures read to the congregation in the synagogue.<sup>19</sup> These gatherings were an essential part of his experience from the earliest years of childhood. He continued meeting in the synagogue until he was finally denied access through house arrest.<sup>20</sup>

The significance of the synagogue experience was that it controlled the way Paul heard the Jewish scriptures. Hearing it corporately was not a distorting influence, for the messages of the prophets were rarely delivered to individuals, they were delivered to the people of the covenant collectively.<sup>21</sup> The gathered congregation was therefore the ideal setting to hear the same word being delivered to another generation of the covenant people.

The same principle is being followed in Paul's letters. He expects the believers to gather together to hear them read. Indeed, the possibility of individuals having their own private copy could hardly have crossed the mind of the apostle. He wrote his letters to them to be read out and his arguments were therefore constructed with that setting in mind.<sup>22</sup> In other words, the practice of interpreting letters written to churches as though they were to individuals, causes serious distortion when it comes to interpreting their contents. The letters are not about what God has done or is doing for a Christian. They are what God has done or is doing for His covenant people, the church.<sup>23</sup> It is not permissible, despite the wide spread practice, to read the details as though they describe the experience of the solitary believer. Such

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<sup>18</sup> Eph 2:15; Col. 3:10.

<sup>19</sup> Lk. 4:16; Acts 17:10-12.

<sup>20</sup> Acts 28:30.

<sup>21</sup> Isa. 48:1, 44:1; Jer. 19:3; Ezek. 2:3-5; Hos. 4:1; Amos 3:1.

<sup>22</sup> So Cosgrove, "Other", 614.

<sup>23</sup> Käsemann, *Perspectives*, 65 says: "It is both historically and factually quite wrong to make the individual the starting point of Pauline theology, even when we are considering the concept of salvation history, which is certainly related to man." Käsemann like so many fails to follow his own observation.

practice not only makes much of the individual, it in turn makes little of the covenant community. The privilege of individuals owning their own copy of the scriptures for private reading is a blessing that believers have only recently, in historical terms, enjoyed. This private possession of the scriptures is only possible because of the advance of printing technologies and the increase in personal private wealth.

The importance of the public reading of the letters is endorsed by Witherington who does not seem to appreciate its significance for interpreting the letters corporately, for he fails to do this. Nevertheless Witherington recognises that they were read publicly and, he argues, this gave Paul the opportunity to maximise his argument and its effects. By carefully selecting who took and read the letter, he could have its contents delivered to its best advantage. All the skills of the public orator were used, according to Witherington,<sup>24</sup> to deliver the content of the letter to the gathered congregation.

### **Loss of responsibility?**

If it is argued that this loses the individual perspective of the NT then the reply must be made ‘what is meant by individual perspective?’ Western individualism is certainly not the same as Biblical individualism. That there is clear responsibility in both the OT and the NT for the individuals to apply the word of God to their own lives goes without saying.<sup>25</sup> But that is not individualism in the sense that is normally meant in modern understanding. The Biblical perspective is that every person is a member of a community and that membership determines his/her own self-identity. The individual believer is addressed through the message that is given to the people of God and its primary reference is to that covenant people. It necessarily has a secondary reference, to the individual as he/she is called to fulfill their obligations to the covenant. The OT prophets reminded Israel of the unique relationship that existed between her and Yahweh. They called her, and by implication each individual Jew, to live out what they were. So Paul followed the same pattern. He constantly reminded the church of her calling<sup>26</sup> and appealed that she would live as the covenant community in the world.<sup>27</sup> At times he applied his exhortations to specific groups of people<sup>28</sup> spelling out the ramifications of what he has said for their daily living. Very occasionally he even address individuals,<sup>29</sup> but the undoubted thrust of the letters is that they are addressed by and large to the church. If this is lost sight of, they become texts that wrongfully endorse all manner of unbiblical individualistic understandings and behaviour.

In insisting that the letters are to the church we are not saying anything new. Most commentators say the same thing.<sup>30</sup> However, despite acknowledging

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<sup>24</sup> Witherington, *Corinthians*, 45.

<sup>25</sup> Lev. 19:3ff, 18:6ff, 20:3ff; Mt. 5:21-48, 18:15-17, 19:16-22; Lk. 3:10ff, 8:12; Jn. 14:15-21; Acts 2:40-41; 1 Cor. 10:6-14 etc etc.

<sup>26</sup> Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 10:3ff; Eph. 1:13-14, 2:11-3.13; Col. 1:12-14; 1 Thess. 1:12-14.

<sup>27</sup> Rom. 12:1ff; Eph. 5:1; Phil. 2:1ff; Col. 3:2ff.

<sup>28</sup> 1 Cor. 7:25-28; Eph. 5:22-25, 6:1-9.

<sup>29</sup> Rom. 16:1ff; Phil. 4:2; Col. 4:17.

<sup>30</sup> “...the gospel articulated in Romans addresses God’s election and transformation of a people, not just individuals coram Deo. In other words, the theology of Romans deals with the formation of the covenant

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the corporate dimension of the letters, they are, to my knowledge, never interpreted corporately. Some do identify sections of the letters to be about corporate experience but they lapse into individualism in interpreting the rest of the letter. I shall seek to keep this corporate perspective to the fore of our thinking as I attempt to interpret the letters. I shall seek to interpret the letters as describing the church's experience unless there is clear evidence that Paul is directing his teaching to a particular individual or group of people within the church such as the husbands or children.

### **Community and initiation.**

If these claims concerning the corporate nature of the letters are correct, then they inevitably raise questions concerning initiation. This is unavoidable because the passages that have been commonly seen to refer to the individual experience of being brought into the covenant community will with this refocusing be seen to be speaking of the historical creation of the covenant with the covenant community. The question that must therefore be answered is where does the individual believer fit into this scheme of reading?<sup>31</sup>

The question is a serious one. There are those who view salvation as universally applied to the whole of mankind and such would see no problem. They would no doubt accept the corporate reading with enthusiasm. Such euphoria over having found a solution to their own problems of inclusion is however ill-founded. It will become clear that Paul insists that there is a fundamental division in the human race. It is no longer Jew and Gentile but a new division has come into existence. There are those who are in Adam<sup>32</sup> and those who are in Christ. It is of course true that *in Christ* there are no ultimate divisions of status,<sup>33</sup> but it is abuse of Paul's argument to say that he claims that this truth applies to all humanity. To ignore this fundamental premise of two separate communities under their respective heads so clearly found in Pauline theology, is to destroy the very basis of his arguments. Whatever the doctrine of salvation that is developed, what can be certain is, if this fundamental division is ignored, then it is not corresponding accurately to the realities that the apostle taught.

Whatever the solution to this problem is, one thing is clear, the early church saw the absolute need for personal repentance and faith.<sup>34</sup> There is no suggestion that man automatically benefits from Christ representing sinners before God. Whatever the theological structures that under gird the doctrine of salvation, God calls all men everywhere to repent and believe.<sup>35</sup> Any argument for the early church's understanding of the corporate nature of the letters must respect this clear basic tenant of the early church's understanding which is expressed so clearly by her evangelistic ministry.

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community", Hays "Adam" 84.

<sup>31</sup> See Wright, *Victory*, 256 for his understanding of individual conversion in a community setting. In *Testament*, 278 he says: "It is important not to lose sight of the corporate nature of these ideas. In so far as individual Jews reflected on their own state before God, it was as members of the larger group, whether the nation or some particular sect." Despite these comments, in common with other scholars, Wright fails to adequately explore these corporate implications.

<sup>32</sup> Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22.

<sup>33</sup> 1 Cor. 12:13ff; Gal. 3:25ff.

<sup>34</sup> Matt. 3:1-6; Acts 2:38-41, 8:34-38; Rom. 10:9.

<sup>35</sup> Rom. 10:9-15.

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To suggest solutions to this problem at this stage is to anticipate the arguments that need to be made. Not until the relevant texts have been considered and a case has been made for their individual or corporate perspectives will it make sense to offer a solution.<sup>36</sup>

### **Covenant and the theology of Paul.**

It will be evident from what has been argued that the perspective that I am taking in my interpretation presupposes a covenantal framework for the thinking of the apostle. Like the issue of initiation just discussed it would be tempting to try to justify this framework at the beginning of the argument. However, this task also has to wait until there has been a careful examination of the text and the theological substructures that uphold their arguments. For this reason justification for using a covenantal framework for interpreting the letters of Paul will be kept until the evidence of the letters as a whole can be considered.<sup>37</sup>

### **Pauline theology and the prophets.**

We have noted Paul's dependence on Isaiah particularly but also on the OT as a whole. He continually refers to the great themes of the promises made by the prophets when they spoke of a coming New Exodus. In this exposition of Paul I intend to take Paul's commitment to the OT scriptures seriously and to attempt to understand him from that perspective; especially from within the New Exodus paradigm.<sup>38</sup> I believe that it can be shown that his doctrinal system fits perfectly into this model and that it resolves many of the difficulties Pauline Theology has traditionally assumed to have existed. It is this perspective that allows him to argue that his gospel is according to the scriptures and that they are the fulfillment of the promises that God has made to His people.

### **Conclusion.**

I am arguing that Paul was not the innovator of Christian doctrine. Instead, he is the faithful ambassador who with conscientiously delivered his masters message to the Gentiles. He stayed within the framework of OT theology and stressed the promises that had been made regarding the acceptance of the Gentiles. Paul received his theological model from his Jewish upbringing in which he was taught that Yahweh would bring about the promised New Exodus. He had come to realise that this had been inaugurated by the death of the only Son in his Paschal death. We shall see in chapter four that Paul saw himself to called to the prophetic ministry of the New Covenant. In the next chapter I am going to consider the relevance of the Pseudepigraphal literature for understanding Paul. I will argue that while it has uses in telling how widespread particular topics occupied the attention of different strands of Judaism, it is nevertheless not appropriate as a source for understanding the

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<sup>36</sup> See chapters 7 and 9.

<sup>37</sup> This task cannot be undertaken in this volume due to limitation of space. For evidence concerning this see my forthcoming volume *Paul and the Spirit*.

<sup>38</sup> Hays "Conversion" 407 says concerning Paul's use of Isaiah in 1 Cor 2.9; 2.16; 3.19 and 3.20; "Paul is trying to remake the minds of his readers by teaching them to interpret their lives in the light of an eschatologically interpreted Scripture."

theological detail of Second Temple Judaism.

### **Excursus**

#### **Scholarly opinion concerning paul's use of the scriptures.**

Having considered the expectations of Judaism we need to ask how the NT writers and Paul particularly, used the OT in their arguments.

The apparent haphazard use of the OT in the NT has long been an embarrassment for Christians. The best that could be claimed was that though it followed methods of interpretation that are totally unacceptable in today's terms, nevertheless these methods were consistent within the accepted exegetical principles of Second Temple Judaism. Following Rabbinic methodology for interpreting the OT, the NT writers were able to massage the text of the OT in the process of interacting with a series of vaguely related texts. By this method, the desired meaning that was sought was demonstrated to be in the original text.<sup>39</sup>

While this explanation disposed of some of the problems, it nevertheless left a major disjunction. The methodology was still making texts say something that the original OT text was never intended or able to say. Such an understanding inevitably led many to conclude that there was no logical relationship between OT and NT theology.

As we have already seen in chapter one, modern scholarship sees a historical development of the message of the NT writings. Most of its Jewish message is seen to have been lost in the process of adapting to the needs of the growing Gentile church. Indeed it is claimed that material was produced by the Hellenistic Church and read back into the ministry of Jesus. It is argued that the Christian gospel absorbed parts of the outlook it was challenging, using its cultural and religious practices as models for explaining its own message. Thus it is not only the Gospels that are seen to have been moulded by Hellenism, but the epistles are also seen to have recast the original *kerygma* into a form that the non-Jewish world could understand. Bruce<sup>40</sup> said that: "There are elements in the NT which are essentially Jewish/ Palestinian, and others which are equally recognisable as Hellenistic, but there is no hard and fast line of demarcation between the two: in the broad central band of the spectrum they merge into each other." Bruce went on to say<sup>41</sup> that the ability to adapt was: the genius of the *Gospel*. Much of the work of modern scholarship centres on identifying the units that emerged and placing them in their time location so as to map the progress of the development of the Christian message. However, what has increasingly been appreciated is that rather than drifting from his Jewish roots, Paul was anxious to show that his gospel was the same as that held in Jerusalem. He did not alter the primitive Gospel to suit the Gentiles.<sup>42</sup>

Lindars,<sup>43</sup> while accepting that Paul was saturated in the OT, denied any logic behind the selection of the texts and doubted that a NT theology based on the OT ever existed in the early church. He argued that such a claim demanded:

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<sup>39</sup> see Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 19-50.

<sup>40</sup> Bruce, "Classical", 232.

<sup>41</sup> op cit 241.

<sup>42</sup> so Noack, "Faithfulness", 51. See Riegel, "Jewish", 410-415 for a description of Jewish Christianity.

<sup>43</sup> Lindars, "Place", 61.

“that items of gospel tradition were entirely evolved out of Old Testament prototypes.”<sup>44</sup> Lindars claimed that the actual provable use of the OT in the NT does not support such a hypothesis. This is similar to Bultmann<sup>45</sup> who claimed that the original meaning and context of the Old Testament sayings are entirely irrelevant, as does Galloway.<sup>46</sup>

Grech<sup>47</sup> saw the use of the OT to be without reference to its original context, the text being interpreted not in the light of its original meaning, but of the Christ event: “The interest of the readers was not that of knowing what happened of old but how the words of the law and the prophets illuminated the events which were taking place in their own days.”<sup>48</sup>

This haphazard use of the OT by the NT writers is supported by Klijn,<sup>49</sup> Casey,<sup>50</sup> Davies<sup>51</sup> and Hooker.<sup>52</sup> It was inevitable that if this was the way NT writers used the Old Testament, then there was no possibility of a basic paradigm existing that guided the NT writers.<sup>53</sup>

All of the views considered above undermined the earlier work by Dodd.<sup>54</sup> He identified a possible solution to the problem. By analysing the use of the OT in the NT, he concluded that the patterns that emerged suggested that the NT writers used the same OT material. He claimed from this evidence that there were books of testimonies which the early church had collated which related to various subjects. Dodd went beyond this observation to suggest that the texts cited were used as a pointer back to the passages out of which they had been taken. He argued that the early church would have known the OT scriptures so well that the mention of a few key words that were familiar would have had the effect of bringing to the readers/hearers minds all that the original OT passage contained. In other words, the theology of the passage that the text was originally in was brought over into the passage it now was quoted in. Dodd argued that the use of the quoted text could be shown to have followed careful exegetical principles in which there was no violation of the text’s original meaning. In fact, the original OT context was used to understand its significance in the NT. Dodd’s claims certainly avoided the skepticism that had developed, but as we have seen above, they were not widely received.

While many have rejected Dodd’s thesis, there are those who have supported

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<sup>44</sup> op cit 60.

<sup>45</sup> Bultmann, *Primitive*, 187.

<sup>46</sup> Galloway, *Cosmic*, 47; Fridrichsen, *Jesus*, 61 says: “Western Christianity, and especially its Biblical theology, must learn the limitations as well as the advantages of its Greek intellectual heritage. Sanders “History” 52 says that: “A great deal of NT scholarship seems to strive to decanonize the NT, reading it only in terms of its Hellenistic context.” Note O’Neill, *Acts*, 146 who says that: “Judaism...provided the ethos for Christian thinking. Cremer *Biblico* Preface to 1st edition page V says: It will likewise show the common complaint, that many notions which theology deals with are inadmissible, is directed mainly against conceptions that have been alienated from their scriptural basis, that have lost their clearness, and have (if I may use the term) again become naturalized.”

<sup>47</sup> Grech, “Testimonia”, 319, see also Fitzmyer, “Use”, 331.

<sup>48</sup> op cit 322.

<sup>49</sup> Klijn, “Study”, 431.

<sup>50</sup> Casey, “Earliest”, 272.

<sup>51</sup> Davies, “Canon”, 34.

<sup>52</sup> Hooker, “Use”, 305-6.

<sup>53</sup> Boer, “Foundation”, 55-68. “Among Pauline scholars generally there is little hope that the older approach of searching for a central idea, such as justification or union with Christ, from which Paul’s theology radiated. Like spokes from a hub, will prove fruitful”, so also Reid, “Paul”, 19.

<sup>54</sup> Dodd, *According*, 1ff.

Paul and the prophets.

it. Beal<sup>55</sup> for example has claimed that the NT hermeneutic was faithful to the meaning of the OT text. What he was unable to say was what the paradigm was that guided their interpretation other than the general theme of redemptive history. Beal commented: “Jesus and the apostles had an unparalleled redemptive historical perspective on the OT’s relation to their own situation.” He further claimed that: NT scripture interprets the OT Scripture by expanding its meaning, seeing new implications in it and giving it new application. Therefore, the canon interprets the canon, later parts of the canon draw out and explain more clearly the earlier parts. He went on to claim that: “Of all the major OT citations and allusions found in the NT only a very few plausible examples of non-contextual usage’s have been noted by critics.”

Even the few examples which Beal has allowed to be non contextual may in fact be found to be contextual once the paradigm has been correctly identified. Käsemann also saw that: “Paul found in the OT the harbinger of what was to come and the criterion for a proper understanding of the present.”<sup>56</sup> Fischer<sup>57</sup> saw this faithfulness to the meaning of earlier scripture to have been characteristic of the OT prophets themselves, for Jeremiah had argued that the new covenant would be nothing less than the true fulfillment of the teaching of Moses.

Thus an increasing number of scholars<sup>58</sup> are turning from the skepticism of previous generations. Indeed, it is increasingly being recognised that Paul’s gospel can only be understood in Jewish terms.<sup>59</sup> The unity of OT and NT theology was emphasised by Hubbard,<sup>60</sup> who wrote: “Not only does the Old Testament prophecy lead into the New, but the NT appropriates the Old Testament promises and reads them as preparation for God’s new beginning.” Noack<sup>61</sup> said that the time is past when Paul could be made responsible for having altered the primitive Gospel to suit the requirements of the non-Jewish world and of having invented a whole Christology and doctrine of salvation by atonement in Christ. Paul was anxious to stay in complete accord with the Jerusalem church and its leaders. Beker<sup>62</sup> says that it was essential for Paul to maintain that the Jews still had priority in the Gospel, otherwise God’s faithfulness to his promises would be in doubt and faith in a God who went back on his promises would seriously weaken Christian confidence. Similarly, any tampering with the plain meaning of scripture would equally invalidate the authority of scripture and by implication the covenant promises of God. Thus any theory of hermeneutics that does not take these factors into

<sup>55</sup> Beal, “Wrong Text”, 91, see also Harman, “Aspects”, 17.

<sup>56</sup> Käsemann, *Romans*, 94. Longenecker, “Exegesis”, 3-38 disputes that we will ever reproduce the exegetical method of the NT.

<sup>57</sup> Fischer, “Fulfillment”, 176.

<sup>58</sup> See Wright, *Messiah*, 171; Namos, *Mystery*, 7; Munck, “Jewish”, 203 says: “The Jewish-Christian missionaries of the first generation set a Jewish-Christian stamp on the Gentile Church.”

<sup>59</sup> so Wright, *Messiah*, 321-2. cf also Hooker, *Paul*, 1f. Davies, “People”, 14 also sees things differently from the religio-historical perspective, but allows for some theological contextualization . He says: “Paul, while he also exploits Hellenistic forms and literary genres, takes seriously the scriptures of his people and seeks to deal with the problem in their terms-employing rabbinical and other methods to do justice both to this new emergence, the Christian community and its matrix, the Jewish people”. He goes on to say (p20) that Paul did not think in terms of moving into a new religion, “For him the gospel was according to the scriptures”.

<sup>60</sup> Hubbard, “Hope”, 58.

<sup>61</sup> Noack, “Hellenistic”, 51.

<sup>62</sup> Beker, “Faithfulness”, 11.

account should be viewed as being out of touch with the NT world. The historical context requires that the hermeneutic for understanding Paul respects Yahweh's promises in such a way that they are clearly, even to Gentile believers, fulfilled in Christ. The mind of the first century was no less able to see flaws in arguments than is the twenty-first century counterpart. Davies<sup>63</sup> said that Paul took the scriptures seriously. Grech<sup>64</sup> pointed to the harmony between OT meaning and NT usage. This OT perspective for Paul's thinking was supported by Barrett,<sup>65</sup> who said that: "Paul's Jewish heritage continued after his conversion. Indeed, Paul saw himself in the stream of OT prophetic ministry."<sup>66</sup> Hays<sup>67</sup> says: "We will have great difficulty understanding Paul, the pious first-century Jew, unless we seek to situate his discourse appropriately within what Hollander calls the 'cave of resonant signification' that enveloped him: Scripture." Again, Hays says: "To read Paul against this background of inner-biblical exegesis is to understand his place in the stream of tradition in a new way. He saw himself as a prophetic figure, carrying forward the proclamation of God's word as Israel's prophets and sages had always done, in a way that reactivated past revelation under new conditions."<sup>68</sup>

Hays demonstrated that the NT writers used the original context of the OT they cited as a 'resonance chamber', amplifying the significance of the quotation as it echoed in the theological context of the passage from which it was taken. Such usage obviously supposed that the readers were acquainted with the literary method in order for them to benefit from the skilfully constructed effects.<sup>69</sup>

Thus it is now being appreciated that Paul was anxious to underline the fact that his Gospel was according to the scriptures and to show that it was in complete harmony with what the church in Jerusalem taught.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, this move toward reconciling Paul with his supposed abandoned roots has been accelerated by recent scholarship. It has come to recognise the essential Jewish nature, of not only Paul's writings, but indeed those of the whole of the NT. Namos has recently written: "Where NT scholarship is concerned, the literature can now be read as Jewish correspondence, written by and for Jews and gentiles concerned with the Jewish context of their faith in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah- Simply put, we can now read the NT as Jewish book."<sup>71</sup> Namos further says: "The very Jewish Paul whom Luke portrays in Acts can be seen also in Romans."<sup>72</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Davies, "People", 14.

<sup>64</sup> Grech, "Testimonia", 319. cf Bring, "Paul", 21ff.

<sup>65</sup> Barrett, "Sacrificed", 147-8.

<sup>66</sup> so also Lane, "Covenant", 3ff who says that Paul's aim was to make clear the meaning and significance of all that his predecessors had predicted.

<sup>67</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 21, see also Harmon, "Aspects", 17 and Davies, "People", 14. Sanders, "History", 56 asks what influence should be attributed to the targums in this process.

<sup>68</sup> op cit 14. Disputed by Beker, "Intertextuality", 66 and Green, "Doing", 61-63.

<sup>69</sup> The author can testify to the feasibility of this hypothesis. When lecturing in communist Romania to Christian leaders who had no libraries apart from their Bible, the mention of an obscure OT text would immediately produce a response in which they added the historical and theological significance of the passage quoted. They would immediately use the information to interpret the significance of the text as quoted in the NT.

<sup>70</sup> See Collins, "Scripture", 153 who argues that Paul cited the OT in the context of an oral tradition, the Exodus being a key feature.

<sup>71</sup> Namos, *Mystery*, 4.

<sup>72</sup> op cit. 18.

What Dodd's work, as well as most of those who followed his basic thesis lacked, was a paradigm to demonstrate what the guiding principle for quoting the OT was. For a paradigm to be established, it is necessary to demonstrate that Judaism itself respected the context of the OT texts it cited in its own writings. Also, it is necessary to demonstrate that the proposed paradigm was commonly held in Judaism in order that its inferences might be readily identified by the readers. Evidence has been presented for the widespread expectation of the New Exodus that naturally forms a common paradigm. Evidence that Judaism respected the context of OT texts was provided recently by Brewer.<sup>73</sup> He has shown that the Rabbis prior to 70AD paid careful attention to the origin of the passages they cited and followed a method of exegesis which was faithful to the original context. This had been anticipated by both Longenecker<sup>74</sup> and Ellis.<sup>75</sup> Thus if the NT writers followed Rabbinic methodology in expounding OT scripture, then we might expect this methodology to be reflected in the NT use of the OT. This practice ought at least to be found in Paul for he was trained in the rabbinical schools, as were many of the early converts from Judaism.<sup>76</sup> We have already seen that there was a common hermeneutic model for both Judaism and the NT church, the New Exodus.

Thus, what I am saying is that we ought to find in Paul's exegesis of the OT (and indeed this inevitably applies to the rest of the NT writers!) respect for the original context and meaning of the cited texts and that these citations should be examined for their associations with the theme of the New Exodus.

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<sup>73</sup> Brewer, *Techniques*, 1ff.

<sup>74</sup> Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 105.

<sup>75</sup> Ellis, *Prophecy*, 179.

<sup>76</sup> Acts 6:7 & 21:20.