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**Some Implications of Stephen J. Chester's Critique of the New  
Perspective on Paul for N. T. Wright's Understanding of the  
Gospel Found in Paul's New Testament Writings**

By  
Sándor Molnár

A Project Submitted to  
the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Theology.

Saint Louis, Missouri

2026

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## Abstract

This thesis critically reassesses central questions of the New Perspective on Paul in sustained dialogue with the Reformed tradition, with the aim of evaluating the prospects for possible reconciliation. The scope of the study is limited to the form of the New Perspective articulated by N. T. Wright, particularly as presented in *What Saint Paul Really Said*, while the primary critical interlocutor is Stephen J. Chester, whose arguments are examined chiefly through his recent volumes *Reading Paul with the Reformers* and *Paul through the Eyes of the Reformers*.

Chapter 1 establishes the historical and intellectual background of the study and formulates the principal research questions, focusing on the meaning of the righteousness of God, the works of the law, justification, and the nature of the gospel. Chapters 2 and 3 provide analytical summaries of Wright's and Chester's respective works, each assessed in light of these guiding questions. Chapter 4 lays the conceptual foundation for the subsequent analysis by examining Jesus' intentions in his earthly ministry as portrayed in the four canonical Gospels. Chapter 5 presents a lexical investigation of gospel-related terminology in the New Testament, tracing patterns of usage across the biblical authors. Chapter 6 develops the methodological framework for identifying gospel concepts and applies this approach to the Epistles of Peter, John, James, and Jude. Chapter 7 then explores several central gospel themes—most notably the Kingdom of God, whose significance emerged from the lexical study, as well as justification by faith and the person of Jesus.

Building on this preparatory work, Chapter 8 offers the main analysis, engaging Wright's proposal and Chester's critique in conversation with recent scholarship on Second Temple Judaism and Pauline theology. The findings argue that Wright's formulation of the New Perspective, while creative and influential, can be shown to include a series of exegetical and theological misinterpretations and that, on the questions examined, the evidence on which Wright claims to build aligns more closely with the classical Reformed reading.

Particular emphasis is placed on the doctrine of the gospel as the primary evaluative lens of the study. Drawing on the preparatory chapters, the thesis develops an analytical framework that includes a core definition of the gospel together with a methodological set of criteria for theological assessment. Applied to Wright's proposal, this framework suggests that his definition of the gospel lacks both sufficient substantive content and theological coherence, whereas the study concludes that the Reformers' understanding provides a more adequate account.

The analysis contends that Wright's framework entails far-reaching doctrinal consequences, effectively dismantling the traditional doctrine of penal substitution and thereby fundamentally reshaping—and ultimately distorting—the historic understanding of the gospel, while also introducing a works-related dimension into final justification and significantly diminishing the personal dimension of salvation.

At the same time, the thesis acknowledges constructive contributions of the New Perspective. It has stimulated extensive research on Second Temple Judaism, encouraged greater attentiveness to the historical and social context of Pauline theology, promoted contextually informed exegesis, and sharpened scholarly engagement with the social and

ecclesiological dimensions of Paul's thought, particularly in ongoing debates about justification.

Chapter 9 identifies areas in which limited convergence may be possible, suggesting that certain shared themes offer tentative points of contact between the two traditions. Chapter 10 concludes with a synthesis of the study's findings and advances a constructive proposal: the development of a shared theological vocabulary grounded in concepts defined with clarity and consistency across both interpretive frameworks, as a step toward more precise and fruitful dialogue in future Pauline scholarship.

*To Zsuzsi,  
for her amazing love and continuous support*

“The heart of the gospel is redemption, and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.”

C. H. Spurgeon

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Glory be to my heavenly Father for his call and provision in all times.

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Unless otherwise noted, the Greek New Testament quotations from the Greek New Testament are from Aland, Kurt, Barbara Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger. *Novum Testamentum Graece*. 28th Edition. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.

## **Abbreviations**

ESV	English Standard Version
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NPP	New Perspective on Paul
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
RSV	Revised Standard Version

# Chapter 1

## Rethinking the New Perspective on Paul<sup>1</sup>: Methodology and Literature Review

The purpose of this thesis is to revisit, clarify, and critically evaluate the central questions of the NPP in dialogue with the traditional Reformed view, with particular attention to recent scholarship, in order to assess the prospects for a possible future rapprochement within Pauline studies. This introductory chapter outlines the significance of the topic, surveys the historical development of the NPP and its major strands, and reviews key scholarship on Second Temple Judaism. It then presents the purpose statement, research questions, and methodological approach of the study, before concluding with an overview of its broader significance.

### Why is this topic important?

NPP represents a widespread and in certain respects revisionist movement that effected a significant paradigm shift in Pauline studies. Its proposals have implications for several core loci of Christian theology, including soteriology, ecclesiology, eschatology, and Christology, and, most notably, for the interpretation of the gospel itself. From the standpoint of the Reformation tradition, the NPP's construal of justification—perceived as integrating elements of both faith and works—raises serious concerns regarding its compatibility with the principle of *sola fide*. Given its increasing influence, including

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter in this thesis, this will be abbreviated as NPP.

within evangelical scholarship, the NPP remains one of the most significant issues to which contemporary biblical and theological studies must continue to give sustained attention.

### **Historical summary of the NPP**

The NPP, now spanning more than half a century, is best understood against the backdrop of its intellectual roots and historical development. Important precursors to the movement include the works of William Wrede, Albert Schweitzer, Claude Montefiore, George Foot Moore, and Krister Stendahl. Wrede<sup>2</sup> and Schweitzer<sup>3</sup> both challenged the centrality of justification by faith as the organizing principle of Paul's theology, while Montefiore<sup>4</sup> and Moore<sup>5</sup> fostered a more historically nuanced understanding of Judaism. Stendahl, for his part, argued<sup>6</sup> that Western interpreters—including the Reformers—had misread Paul by projecting introspective, guilt-centered concerns onto his writings, whereas Paul's primary focus lay on the historical and communal question of Gentile inclusion. At the same time, Stendahl renewed attention to justification by calling for a reconsideration of its definition and function within Pauline theology.<sup>7</sup> Together, these contributions helped to prepare the conceptual ground for the emergence of the NPP.

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<sup>2</sup> William Wrede, *Paul* (London: Philip Green, 1907).

<sup>3</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1931).

<sup>4</sup> Claude Montefiore, *Judaism and St. Paul* (London: Goschen, 1914).

<sup>5</sup> George Foot Moore, "Christian Writers on Judaism," in *Judaism* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1921), 14:1927–30.

<sup>6</sup> Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *Harvard Theological Review* 56, no. 3 (1963): 199–215.

<sup>7</sup> Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1976), 131.

Building on these preparatory currents, a decisive turning point came with the publication of E. P. Sanders's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*<sup>8</sup> in 1977, which argued that Second Temple Judaism should not be characterized as a religion of legalistic works-righteousness but rather as displaying a pattern of "covenantal nomism," in which obedience to the law functioned within the framework of divine grace. Sanders's work was critically acclaimed and for many fundamentally reshaped the historical context within which Paul's polemic against the law was interpreted.

James D. G. Dunn subsequently coined the expression "New Perspective on Paul" in a 1982 lecture,<sup>9</sup> which was later published<sup>10</sup> in 1990. Dunn further developed the approach by proposing that Paul's criticism of the "works of the law" is best understood as directed primarily against ethnic boundary markers—such as circumcision, dietary regulations, and Sabbath observance—that distinguished Jews from Gentiles. In this reading, Paul's concern was not chiefly with the problem of human self-righteousness but with the inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God apart from adopting Jewish identity markers.

N. T. Wright expanded and systematized these insights within a broader narrative-historical framework, situating Paul's theology within the story of Israel's covenant, exile,

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<sup>8</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> James D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 65 (1983): 95–122.

<sup>10</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 183–214.

and anticipated restoration, and emphasizing the ecclesiological and eschatological dimensions of justification.<sup>11</sup>

Since its emergence, the NPP has generated extensive debate, particularly with scholars representing traditional Reformation interpretations, who have questioned both its historical reconstructions of Judaism and its theological implications for doctrines such as justification and imputed righteousness. Nevertheless, the movement has had a lasting impact on Pauline studies by foregrounding the Jewish context of Paul, encouraging more historically grounded exegesis, and broadening the range of questions asked about the apostle's theology.

### **Subsequent developments of the NPP**

The NPP is best understood not as a single unified theory but as a diverse and evolving conversation that continues to shape contemporary discussions of Paul's thought. D. A. Carson notes that it is not monolithic: "Rather, it is a bundle of interpretive approaches to Paul, some of which are mere differences in emphasis, and others of which compete rather antagonistically."<sup>12</sup> Twenty-five years after the emergence of the NPP, Stephen Westerholm, in his essay *The "New Perspective" at Twenty-Five*,<sup>13</sup> surveyed thirty-three different approaches to Judaism and Paul, illustrating the diversity and

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<sup>11</sup> N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> D. A. Carson, "Introduction," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, vol. 1, *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Westerholm, "The 'New Perspective' at Twenty-Five," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, vol. 2, *The Paradoxes of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 1–38.

divergence within the movement—a divergence that continued to develop in the subsequent decades.<sup>14</sup> Alongside these more clearly defined positions, a number of scholars have advanced approaches that may be described as “partly NPP,” including John Barclay,<sup>15</sup> Richard B. Hays,<sup>16</sup> Douglas Campbell,<sup>17</sup> and Michael Bird.<sup>18</sup> These perspectives, which variously appropriate and revise NPP insights, will be examined in detail in Chapter 9.

## Second Temple Judaism

Recent scholarship on Second Temple Judaism is synthesized most comprehensively in major survey works such as John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow in their book *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview*<sup>19</sup> and Lester L. Grabbe’s historical studies,<sup>20</sup> which integrate literary, historical, and archaeological research to present the

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<sup>14</sup> Matthew V. Novenson and R. Barry Matlock, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Pauline Studies* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2022).

<sup>15</sup> John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Michael F. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification and the New Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow, eds., *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Lester L. Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism: History and Religion of the Jews in the Time of Nehemiah, the Maccabees, Hillel, and Jesus* (London, England: T&T Clark, 2010); Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, vol. 4, *The Jews under the Roman Shadow (4 BCE-150 CE)*, (London, England: T&T Clark, 2023).

current state of the field. Collins argues<sup>21</sup> that modern scholarship on Second Temple Judaism has shifted from viewing the period through a narrow, largely textual lens to recognizing it as a diverse and contested religious landscape. Fueled especially by the Dead Sea Scrolls discoveries and interdisciplinary methods, research now emphasizes the plurality of Jewish groups, beliefs, and practices rather than a single “normative” Judaism. Collins concludes that this methodological and evidentiary expansion has not produced consensus but instead a more complex, historically grounded picture that continues to shape discussions of early Christianity and debates such as those surrounding the NPP.

## Purpose Statement

This thesis aims to present significant implications of the recent critique of the NPP<sup>22</sup> focusing on the outlook advocated by N. T. Wright (as summarized in his book *What St. Paul Really Said*), and its critique presented by Stephen J. Chester (*Reading Paul with the Reformers, Paul through the Eyes of the Reformers*), focusing on the benefits of Wright’s NPP to Pauline scholarship and the possibility of the reconciliation with the traditional Reformed view.

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<sup>21</sup> John J. Collins, “A Contested Field: Half a Century of Study of Second Temple Judaism,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 50, no. 4/5 (2019): 437–59.

<sup>22</sup> This thesis does not aim to investigate in detail other variations of the NPP often cited in connection with N. T. Wright (e.g., the views of E. P. Sanders and James D. G. Dunn) or subsequent appropriations of purported NPP findings, but focuses on the view represented by Wright in his book *What St. Paul Really Said*. Moreover, the thesis does not aim to reflect all critiques of the NPP but to draw primarily on the work of Stephen J. Chester, presented in his two books *Reading Paul with the Reformers* and *Paul through the Eyes of the Reformers*.

## Research Questions

This thesis seeks to investigate a set of interrelated theological and exegetical questions that lie at the heart of the contemporary debate surrounding the NPP viewed in dialogue with the traditional Reformed understanding of Pauline theology. Particular attention is given to the meaning of the gospel, as it constitutes the central and foundational message of Scripture and must be properly understood, not only because of its theological significance but also due to its crucial practical implications for pastoral theology. Accordingly, the study is guided by the following primary research questions:

- What is the meaning of the *righteousness of God*?
- How should *justification* be defined and understood?
- What is the referent and significance of the phrase *works of the law*?
- How should the *gospel* be defined in light of the New Testament witness?

Building on the conclusions reached in these areas, the thesis also addresses a second set of integrative questions that consider the broader theological implications of the analysis:

- What constructive insights, if any, can be appropriated from the NPP?
- To what extent is a theological rapprochement between the NPP and the traditional Reformed view possible?

## Methodology of the Study

This study employs a multi-method research design to examine the theological and exegetical issues central to the debate between the NPP and the traditional Reformed interpretation. It combines a critical review of relevant primary and secondary literature with close biblical exegesis and lexical-semantic word studies of key New Testament texts.

Where appropriate, narrative analysis is used to situate theological claims within the broader canonical context, while comparative hermeneutical evaluation and historical-critical inquiry serve to assess the underlying interpretive frameworks.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study offer a constructive framework for evaluating the NPP articulated by N. T. Wright, and its theological implications after more than fifty years of scholarly NPP development. The significance of this research lies in its potential to contribute to several interrelated areas of biblical and systematic theology. First, it summarizes our understanding of first-century Judaism as it is reflected in Paul's writings. Second, the study offers a critical reassessment of the Reformation's theological legacy in light of N. T. Wright's interpretation, clarifying points of convergence and divergence. Third, it provides a rigorous evaluation of the claims of the NPP, highlighting both its insights and its limitations. Fourth, the research clarifies key theological themes addressed in the study, including the righteousness of God, justification, works of the law, and the gospel. Finally, by identifying points of potential convergence and divergence between the NPP and the traditional Reformed view, the study discusses avenues for a more precise and constructive dialogue, thereby fostering the possibility of theological rapprochement in future Pauline scholarship.

## Chapter 2

### Summary of N. T. Wright's *What St. Paul Really Said*

Wright's *What Saint Paul Really Said*<sup>23</sup> is among the most influential and controversial of all his books. This easy-to-read and provocative book is an apt and succinct articulation of Wright's articulation of the NPP. In it, Wright studies Paul's words in the light of Paul's Jewish background and builds on the foundations of earlier NPP understandings worked out by E. P. Sanders and James Dunn. He re-interprets the most important concepts of the Reformers, including the "gospel." I consider this book a valuable reference for summarizing Wright's views that relate most directly to his version of the NPP.

To understand Wright's ideas and their fundamental differences from the Reformers' view, I summarize in this chapter the key concepts of Wright's understanding of God's righteousness, justification, the works of the law, and the gospel, based on this book.

### What is the righteousness of God?

Wright discusses his interpretation of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Chapter 6 and admits that it is a controversial technical term<sup>24</sup> usually translated as "the righteousness of God." He argues that for "a reader of the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Jewish scriptures, 'the

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<sup>23</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*.

<sup>24</sup> The complexity of the problem partly comes from that fact that Paul is writing Greek with Hebrew Scriptures in the background and we are writing in English (Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 110).

righteousness of God' would have one obvious meaning: God's own faithfulness to his promises, to the covenant."<sup>25</sup>

Since "righteousness" is a forensic term,<sup>26</sup> Wright analyzes the judge-plaintiff-defendant relationships of the Hebrew law court. He argues that if "righteousness" is applied to the judge and to the plaintiff or defendant, it has different meanings. He reasons that the meaning for the judge is that he handles the case according to the law, but "for the plaintiff or defendant to be 'righteous' in the biblical sense *within the law-court setting* is for them to have that status *as a result of the decision of the court.*"<sup>27</sup> Wright strongly emphasizes that the "righteousness" of the plaintiff or defendant relates only to their status in that specific court case and nothing more. His final verdict is a clear criticism of the traditional interpretation: "it makes no sense whatever to say that the judge imputes, imparts, bequeaths, conveys or otherwise transfers his righteousness to either the plaintiff or the defendant. Righteousness is not an object, a substance, or a gas which can be passed across the courtroom."<sup>28</sup>

Wright discusses the two basic interpretation options for the "righteousness of God": (1) *God's own righteousness* and (2) *the status of righteousness given to humans*. The second option represents the traditional view, having four subcategories: two categories if it is a *genitive of origin* (imputed or imparted righteousness), and two categories if it is an *objective genitive* (natural quality or special gift). The first category

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<sup>25</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 111.

<sup>26</sup> J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 168; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 79–86.

<sup>27</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 113.

<sup>28</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 113.

also represents four subcategories: two categories if it is a *possessive genitive* (“distributive justice” or “covenant faithfulness”), and two categories if it is a *subjective genitive* (acts of covenant faithfulness or non-covenantal world-defeating actions).<sup>29</sup>

He mentions, without detailed exegesis, a few Scriptural examples to support his view, i.e., that the correct interpretation of the righteousness of God is the *covenant faithfulness of God*. In the case of 2 Corinthians 5:20–21, he argues that it is the best interpretation that fits the context.<sup>30</sup> In the case of Romans 10:2–4, Wright again refers to the context without detailed discussion.<sup>31</sup>

Wright concludes that if we interpret the “righteousness of God” as covenant faithfulness of God, then it leads to a clear view of God’s love. However, if we interpret it in the traditional way, “this gives the impression of a legal transaction, a cold piece of business, almost a trick of thought performed by a God who is logical and correct but hardly one we would want to worship.”<sup>32</sup>

### **What is justification?**

Wright claims that the church misunderstood Paul during the last 1,500 years regarding the doctrine of justification: “The discussions of justification in much of the history of the church, certainly since Augustine, got off on the wrong foot—at least in terms

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<sup>29</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 115–20.

<sup>30</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 122.

<sup>31</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 125–27.

<sup>32</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 129.

of understanding Paul—and they have stayed there ever since.”<sup>33</sup> The re-thinking of the doctrine started with “the Sanders revolution,”<sup>34</sup> but Wright argues that even Sanders did not establish the correct definition of justification.

Wright claims that “justification” in Paul’s language corresponds to a three-fold grid: it is a *covenantal language*, it is a *law-court language*, and it is also related to *eschatology*.<sup>35</sup> Regarding covenantal language, he considers justification as “the covenant declaration, which will be issued on the last day, in which the true people of God will be vindicated.”<sup>36</sup> Concerning law-court language, “justification functions like the verdict in the law court: by acquitting someone, it confers on that person the status ‘righteous.’”<sup>37</sup> As for eschatology, “this declaration, this verdict, is ultimately to be made at the end of history.”<sup>38</sup>

Wright did not include a detailed exegetical analysis as a proof for his claims, but only considers a few selected verses as illustrations (Galatians 3:24–29; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Philippians 3:2–11; Romans 1:16–17; 3:21–31). He argues that Paul in Galatians is dealing with the issue of how we can *define the people of God*. He says that the main question is not “how you become a Christian” but rather “how you can tell who is a member of the

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<sup>33</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 133.

<sup>34</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.

<sup>35</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 137.

<sup>36</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 155–56.

<sup>37</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 156.

<sup>38</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 156.

covenant family.”<sup>39</sup> The verse in 1 Corinthians 1:30,<sup>40</sup> which many argue supports the imputed righteousness interpretation used in traditional argumentations,<sup>41</sup> is interpreted by Wright in a different manner. He claims “righteousness” in 1 Corinthians 1:30 is “imputed” in a no greater sense than the “wisdom” or “sanctification” of Christ are “imputed” in that same verse, saying that in the same way we could talk about the imputed wisdom of Christ or the imputed sanctification of Christ. He also claims that the verses listed above from Philippians and from Romans talk about covenant membership. Wright claims they have nothing to do with the salvation of an individual.

### **What are the works of the law?**

Wright’s definition of the “works of the law” is substantially different from the traditional understanding of this term.<sup>42</sup> He considers Jewish ritual and ethnic practices that identify covenant membership as the “works of the law,” and he thinks that they have nothing to do with the “moral deeds” of an individual. Wright argues that “the ‘works of the law’—Sabbath, food-laws, circumcision—thus enabled them to attain a measure of what scholars have called ‘inaugurated eschatology’, the anticipation in the present of what

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<sup>39</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 143.

<sup>40</sup> “And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” Unless otherwise noted, New Testament quotations are from the ESV.

<sup>41</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 193; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 86.

<sup>42</sup> Stephen J. Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers: Reconciling Old and New Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 8, 125–26, 138–47, 169–70.

is to come in the future.”<sup>43</sup> This approach is not new; Horton’s detailed discussion reveals that it was the view of Origen in the second century.<sup>44</sup>

This view has a significant impact on how we understand salvation in first-century Judaism, as it calls in question the traditional understanding of works-righteousness as the Jewish way of salvation. Instead, it claims that Second Temple Jewish soteriology should be understood as covenantal nomism. The term *covenantal nomism*, first used by Sanders,<sup>45</sup> identifies a system in which initial admission (“getting in”) to the people of God is effected by grace, yet perseverance (“staying in”) within that community is sustained by covenantal obedience. The covenantal nomism framework was proposed by Sanders arguing that covenantal nomism was the only religion for the whole of Judaism from 200 B.C. to A.D. 200.<sup>46</sup> If this is true, it rules out the existence of merit-based systems of earning salvation, including the traditional understanding of the “works of the law” in the New Testament. For on Sanders’s reading Paul was not arguing against a works-righteousness Jewish system since such a “pattern of religion” did not exist in Palestine at that time.

### **What is the gospel?**

Wright’s definition of the gospel can be well understood if we first outline his claims about what he denies constitutes the gospel. First, he claims that “the doctrine of

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<sup>43</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 156–57.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Horton, *Justification*, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2018), 1:54–66, 269.

<sup>45</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 422.

<sup>46</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 16–17, 419–28.

justification by faith is not what Paul means by ‘the gospel.’”<sup>47</sup> Second, “‘the gospel’ is not an account of how people get saved.”<sup>48</sup> He thinks that such a misunderstanding of the gospel is very general in many churches and explains it in a practical way:<sup>49</sup>

The word “gospel” and the phrase “the gospel” have come to denote, especially in certain circles within the church, something that in older theology would be called an *ordo salutis*, an order of salvation. “The gospel” is supposed to be a description of how people get saved; of the theological mechanism whereby, in some people’s language, Christ takes our sin and we his righteousness; in other people’s language, Jesus becomes my personal saviour; in other languages again, I admit my sin, believe that he died for me, and commit my life to him.

In addition, Wright admits that he can accept if people say such things about the gospel, but he does not think that it is what the Bible says. In Wright’s words, “I am perfectly comfortable with what people normally mean when they say ‘the gospel’. I just don’t think it is what Paul means.”<sup>50</sup> I will address this puzzling comment later (see chapter 8 below).

Wright introduces his view by establishing the background of the word “gospel.” He argues that both Jewish usage and non-Jewish usage can provide the correct background. The Jewish usage of the word can be supported by Isaiah 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1, which are the key verses of the double theme of Isaiah 40–66: “YHWH’s return to

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<sup>47</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 158.

<sup>48</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 158.

<sup>49</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 39.

<sup>50</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 40.

Zion and enthronement, and the return of Israel herself from her exile in Babylon.”<sup>51</sup>

Wright argues that this Isaiah herald was understood in the first century as *the return of Israel from exile*.<sup>52</sup> Regarding the non-Jewish usage, it is “the announcement of a great victory, or [of] the birth, or accession, of an emperor.”<sup>53</sup>

Wright gives his gospel definition in different ways in his book. The longest definition is the following:<sup>54</sup>

It is a fourfold announcement about Jesus:

1. In Jesus of Nazareth, specifically in his cross, the decisive victory has been won over all the powers of evil, including sin and death themselves.
2. In Jesus’ resurrection the New Age has dawned, inaugurating the long-awaited time when the prophecies would be fulfilled, when Israel’s exile would be over, and the whole world would be addressed by the one creator God.
3. The crucified and risen Jesus was, all along, Israel’s Messiah, her representative king.
4. Jesus was therefore also the Lord, the true king of the world, the one at whose name every knee would bow.

It is, moreover, a double and dramatic announcement about God:

1. The God of Israel is the one true God, and the pagan deities are mere idols.

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<sup>51</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 42.

<sup>52</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 42.

<sup>53</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 42.

<sup>54</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 65–66.

2. The God of Israel is now made known in and through Jesus himself.

Wright's shortest definition is simply: "The gospel is the announcement that Jesus is Lord."<sup>55</sup>

In sum, Wright maintains that the "righteousness of God" is best understood as God's covenantal fidelity, while "justification" designates the divine declaration that an individual belongs to the covenant people. He further posits that the phrase "works of the law" principally refers to those Jewish ritual and ethnocultural practices that functioned as identity-defining boundary markers. Moreover, he asserts that the essence of the gospel consists in the authoritative proclamation of Jesus' lordship. In the subsequent chapter, I will contrast this view with that of the Reformed tradition, examining the same fundamental issues.

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<sup>55</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 183.

## Chapter 3

### **Summary of Stephen J. Chester's Books *Reading Paul with the Reformers* and *Paul through the Eyes of the Reformers***

Stephen J. Chester addresses the complex and long-debated NPP in two recent books, *Reading Paul with the Reformers* and *Paul through the Eyes of the Reformers*.<sup>56</sup> Chester's main purpose is to foster a dialogue between the NPP camp and the traditional Reformed camp.

Chester examines how Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin interpreted Romans, Galatians, and other Pauline epistles within the medieval context, with a focus on soteriological questions. He analyzes how the Reformers handled concepts such as “the law,” “the works of the law,” “sin,” “grace,” “faith,” and “justification.” He explains the various aspects of righteousness (alien, relational, and reciprocal) in the exegesis of Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin.

Chester demonstrates that the Reformers disagreed on some minor questions about the relationship between justification and sanctification. They also had different views on articulating the nature of the believers' relationship with Christ. However, Chester shows that their view had the same framework of a shared grammar. The most important conclusion is that, despite minor differences, there was a general agreement among the Reformers that justification is an imputed righteousness, meaning that sinners receive an alien righteousness provided through faith in Christ.

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<sup>56</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*; Stephen J. Chester, *Paul through the Eyes of the Reformers: Living under Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2025).

Chester acknowledges that NPP scholars significantly clarified that Second Temple Judaism was not a fully legalistic religion of works-righteousness. He also found several misunderstandings in both the traditional and NPP approaches. For example, Chester argues that Wright was correct that there is no Scriptural basis for “transferring” or “passing” righteousness as a substance. On the other hand, Chester also convincingly demonstrates that none of the Reformers claimed this.

Chester provides a convincing exegetical analysis that faithfully presents the Reformers’ views in the context of the NPP debate. His insights significantly advance the scholarship in Pauline studies. One of Chester’s main contributions in this book is to advocate a reconciliation of the traditional and the NPP approaches. He proposes, following Michael Bird’s concept of incorporated righteousness;<sup>57</sup> this means that viewing forensic justification and union with Christ together reveals both forensic and participatory aspects.

Chester’s summary of the Reformers on the righteousness of God, justification, works of the law, and the gospel will now be summarized.

### **What is the righteousness of God?**

Chester refers to Augustine, who interpreted Romans 1:17 by saying “not that by which God is righteous, but that with which he clothes a human being (*induit hominem*)

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<sup>57</sup> Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God*, 71–85.

when he justifies a sinner (*iustificat impium*).”<sup>58</sup> Luther also held this interpretation,<sup>59</sup> as Chester notes: “As Luther had put it almost 30 years earlier in his *Lectures on Romans* (1515–1516), ‘by the righteousness of God (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) we must not understand the righteousness by which He is righteous in Himself (subjective genitive) but the righteousness by which we are made righteous by God (objective genitive).’”<sup>60</sup> Regarding this issue, Melancthon had some differences in his theology relative to Luther’s, mainly in the interpretation of union with Christ, but he basically agreed with Luther.<sup>61</sup> Calvin had a similar view, emphasizing union with Christ,<sup>62</sup> as Chester notes: “Righteousness [for Calvin] is not an independent commodity available to believers as a result of Christ’s sacrificial death but instead a personal attribute of the Christ who died and rose again, which can be received only through union with him.”<sup>63</sup> In summary, despite some minor differences, all the Reformers interpreted the righteousness of God as an objective genitive—a righteousness that we receive from God, by which sinners are made right with Him.

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<sup>58</sup> Augustine, *The Spirit and the Letter*, in *Answer to the Pelagians I*, trans. Roland J. Teske, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century I/23 (New York, NY: New City Press, 1997), 9.15.

<sup>59</sup> Martin Luther, “Römervorlesung (Hs.) 1515/16,” in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: H. Böhlhau, 1883), 56: 172,3–5.

<sup>60</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 207.

<sup>61</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 244.

<sup>62</sup> John Calvin, “*Commentarius in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*,” in *Ioannis Calvini Opera Omnia, Opera Exegetica, II*, (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1992), 13:113, 34–114,10.

<sup>63</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 273.

## What is justification?

Luther, Melanchthon, and Calvin agreed on the basics of justification, i.e., it is a forensic justification,<sup>64</sup> a declaration of the forgiveness of sins on account of Christ's merits. However, Chester finds that they put differing emphasis on related terms as follows.<sup>65</sup>

Like Luther but unlike Melanchthon, Calvin integrates union with Christ and his understanding of justification by faith. Like Melanchthon, but unlike Luther, Calvin nevertheless distinguishes clearly between justification and sanctification and makes extensive use of forensic imagery to describe the former. Like both Luther and Melanchthon, Calvin strives to clarify the relationship between justification and good works of the believer. Unlike either, Calvin wants not only appropriately to value such works but also to stand in continuity with the medieval tradition by regarding them as a lifelong pathway along which believers progress and so grow in sanctity.

In summary, we can conclude that the Reformers employ differing forensic, union, participatory, and relational language, with nuanced differences in their interpretations; however, they are all in agreement that justification is about receiving alien righteousness (the righteousness of Christ) by faith alone, not by works.

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<sup>64</sup> See, e.g., Philip Melanchthon, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), 25.

<sup>65</sup> Chester, *Paul through the Eyes of the Reformers*, 171.

## What are the works of the law?

Chester points out that the Reformers had varying emphases in their discussions, but they had a coherent reading of the “works of the law.” They see these works as expressions of a merit-based approach. “In their interpretation of the phrase ‘works of the law’ the Reformers speak with one voice. They insist that by the ‘works of the law’ Paul intends the whole law, including its ethical aspects, and not merely ceremonies.”<sup>66</sup> It is also important that the Reformers did not consider this work as that kind of work which leads to repentance: “the ‘works of the law’ (ἔργα νόμου) . . . [are] not identified with the theological use of the law in revealing sin. In his *Lectures on Romans* (1515–1516), Luther says that the works of the law are not those that drive one to repentance, but are rather those that ‘are regarded in themselves as being sufficient for righteousness and salvation.’”<sup>67</sup> In summary, the Reformers agree that “‘the works of the law’ are identified not with guilt-racked sinners but with those falsely convinced that they are fulfilling the law and are righteous before God.”<sup>68</sup>

## What is the gospel?

The gospel is also clearly expressed by the Reformers with the same voice as Chester quotes Calvin:<sup>69</sup> “it is the function of the Law to show us the disease without offering any hope of a cure, and it is the function of the Gospel to provide a remedy for

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<sup>66</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 139.

<sup>67</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 125.

<sup>68</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 136.

<sup>69</sup> John Calvin, “*Commentarii in secundam Pauli epistolam ad Corinthios*,” in *Ioannis Calvini Opera Omnia, Opera Exegetica, II*, (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1992), 15:58, 2–3.

those in despair.”<sup>70</sup> For the Reformers, the gospel is the living proclamation and promise of God that sets forth the gratuitous remission of sins, liberation from eternal death, and the imputation of righteousness solely through faith in Christ.

Table 1 below summarizes the main characteristics of Wright’s NPP and the Reformers’ view as explained by Chester.

**Table 1 Comparison of N. T. Wright’s NPP and the Reformers’ view**

	<b>N. T. Wright’s NPP</b>	<b>The Reformers’ view</b>
What is the righteousness of God?	covenant faithfulness of God (possessive genitive)	God’s righteousness given to humans (genitive of origin)
What is justification?	God’s covenant declaration that someone is a member of His people	God’s gracious act of declaring sinners righteous
What are “the works of the law”?	boundary-marking Jewish ritual and ethnic practices	human efforts to achieve righteousness and acceptance before God
What is the gospel?	the announcement that Jesus is Lord	God freely justifies sinners through Christ’s righteousness, received by faith alone

This table delineates a clear contrast between the theological positions of N. T. Wright and key Reformers. The listed characteristics represent fundamental doctrinal

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<sup>70</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 120.

building blocks within Christian theology. Divergence on these core issues generates substantive differences in addressing essential theological and practical questions, ultimately extending to a critical re-examination of Christianity's central proclamation: the definition of the gospel itself.

## Chapter 4

### Preparation for Analysis: Jesus' Intention

Before conducting the comparative analysis of the two viewpoints summarized in chapters 2 and 3 above, a preparatory study will now by the focus below in chapters 4–7. This groundwork provides an essential hermeneutical and conceptual framework to facilitate the subsequent comparative study.

First, in this chapter, I summarize what can be discerned from the four canonical Gospels regarding the nature of the gospel according to Jesus. To this end, I examine his intentions during his earthly ministry.

Jesus' claims and deeds, as recorded in the four canonical Gospels, make understanding his intention during his first-century earthly ministry clear.<sup>71</sup> His global mission was to *reverse the effects of the fall and restore creation* (1 John 3:8, 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, Romans 8:20–21, Colossians 1:19–20, Revelation 21:5, Galatians 3:13). Regarding humanity, his fundamental intention was to *redeem humanity*, i.e., “to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). To achieve this goal, he accomplished several “sub-goals,” which were revealed in his own statements about himself and also in his actions. I grouped his main intentions into three chief categories: *being the Messiah*,

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<sup>71</sup>Contemporary scholarship on the Gospels often dismisses their historicity; the assumption is that they contain recollections of later generations, not the testimony of apostolic eyewitnesses. This thesis cannot enter into these debates. But on the basis of the plausibility of the Gospels containing eyewitness recollection (see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), along with the foundation laid by several NT introductions that defend a high view of the Gospels' reliability, we interpret the Gospel records as true to reports of what Jesus said and did. For the NT introductions see D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005); Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: TN: B&H Academic, 2016); Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990).

*inaugurating the kingdom of God, and saving humanity, as described below.*

First, *Jesus understood himself to be the Messiah*, the deliverer of his people. The Messiah was promised throughout the Old Testament, beginning with Genesis 3:15 and continuing through numerous Messianic prophecies. *Jesus claimed about himself that he was the Messiah* in different circumstances and to different people, including his disciples (Matthew 16:13–20, Mark 8:27–30, Luke 9:18–21), the high priest (Matthew 26:63–64, Mark 14:61–62), Jews (John 10:24–25), Samaritans (John 4:25–26), and Greeks (John 12:20–36). In addition, *Jesus' deeds demonstrated that he was the Messiah*, as he fulfilled at least 191 prophecies,<sup>72</sup> performed over 30 recorded miracles and healings, and most importantly underwent a saving death and resurrection. The fulfillment of the prophecies is more than overwhelming, as these examples show: he was born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1), he entered Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:5), he healed the blind and lame (Isaiah 35:5–6; Matthew 11:4–5), he was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12–13, Matthew 26:14–16), he was silent before his accusers (Isaiah 53:7, Matthew 27:12–14), his hands and feet were pierced (Psalm 22:16, John 20:25–27), his bones were not broken (Psalm 34:20, John 19:33–36), and he was resurrected (Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 53:10, Acts 2:31; Matthew 28:1–10). Other examples could be listed.

Second, *Jesus intended to inaugurate the kingdom of God*. He announced the arrival of the kingdom of God several times (Mark 1:14–15, Matthew 4:17, Luke 17:20–21, Luke 10:9). He also explained the concept and nature of the kingdom of God (Luke 17:20–21). He often used metaphors (Matthew 18:3) or parables in his explanations (Mark

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<sup>72</sup> J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1973), 665–70.

4:30–32, Matthew 13:44–46, Luke 13:18–19, Luke 14:15–16). The message of Jesus about the kingdom of God also includes an *invitation* to the kingdom (Mark 1:15, Matthew 22:2–3, Luke 14:15–24, John 7:37). Moreover, Jesus was teaching in detail about the *ethics* of the kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) or in the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6). During his earthly ministry, Jesus gave many *instructions* on how to live, starting with the repetition of the Great Commandment from the Old Testament (Matthew 22:37–39, Mark 12:28–34, Luke 10:27). He also declared that he had come not to abolish the law but rather to *fulfill the law* (Matthew 5:17–18).

*Jesus intended to institute the New Covenant* as a “constitution” of the kingdom of God, which he did at the Last Supper (Mark 14:22–24, Matthew 26:26–28, Luke 22:19–20). The New Covenant was built on the foundation of the Old Covenant, and it was promised several times in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 31:31–34, Ezekiel 36:24–28, Isaiah 55:3).

*Jesus intended to perform miracles and signs.* He did many miracles and signs to prove his claims and show that the kingdom of God has come in His person. More specifically, Jesus did miracles and signs to *prove his deity* (John 10:37–38), to *confirm his authority to forgive sins* (Matthew 9:6–8), to *fulfill prophecies* (Matthew 8:16–17), to *build faith* (John 20:30–31), as a *response to faith* (Matthew 9:22), to *demonstrate the arrival of the kingdom of God* (Matthew 12:28), and for the *manifestation of God’s Glory* (John 11:40–42).

*Jesus intended to declare his mission statement.* Luke recorded an event in Luke 4:16–21 when Jesus came to Nazareth and read from Isaiah in the synagogue. This event is significant because Jesus directly gives his mission statement by interpreting verses from

Isaiah 61 for himself, saying, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). This is *Jesus’ mission statement* (or more specifically, we might say one of his mission statements) as he declared, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18–19). He claimed that he was in unity with the Father (John 10:30, 14:9–10, 17:21); the Father had sent him (John 5:36–37, 6:38, 8:42), his mission was to preach the gospel (Luke 4:18–19, Mark 1:38, Matthew 4:17), he proclaimed the forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:5–7, Luke 7:48–49, 5:20), he came to heal and cast out demons (Matthew 4:24, Luke 4:40–41, Mark 1:34), and he was the one who saved his people (Matthew 1:21, Luke 19:10, John 3:17, 4:42).

*Jesus always intended to do the will of the Father*, as it was clear from his mission statement, but it is also stated on many other occasions (Mark 14:36, Matthew 26:39, Luke 2:49, John 4:34, 5:30, 6:38, 7:17, 8:16, 8:29, 9:4, 10:37–38, 14:10, 14:31).

Third, *Jesus intended to save humanity from sin*. To accomplish this mission, *Jesus intended to die* for us. He made predictions about his death many times. Jesus predicts his death three times in Mark (Mark 8:31–33, 9:30–32, 10:32–34) and Luke (Luke 9:21–22, 9:43–45, 18:31–34) and even more times in Matthew (Matthew 16:21, 17:22–23, 20:17–19, 26:1–2). He also predicts his death in John (John 3:14). At the time when Jesus ate the final meal with his apostles, he instituted the Lord’s Supper to commemorate his death (Mark 14:22–24, Matthew 26:26–28, Luke 22:19–20). Jesus also *intended to be raised again*, which completed his saving mission after his death. His predictions about his resurrection are recorded in all gospels (Mark 8:31, Matthew 17:22, 12:39, 16:4,

21:42, 27:63, Luke 9:22, John 2:19).

*Jesus intended to make disciples.* Jesus called people to follow him and to be his disciples (Mark 1:17–18, 8:34, 16:15, Matthew 4:19, 10:37–39, 16:24, Luke 9:23, 14:25–27, 14:33, John 8:31,32, 13:14–17, 13:34–35). He wanted the life of his disciples to be a testimony about God (Matthew 5:13–16).

*Jesus intended that his disciples would continue his disciple-making mission.* Jesus directly commands the apostles to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:18–20). His disciple-making process includes baptizing people in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything Jesus has commanded. Jesus has sent his disciples to preach the gospel to everyone (Mark 16:15) and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

*Jesus intended that his disciples would wait for his second coming.* This also reflects the “already-not-yet” nature of the kingdom he preached. He taught about his second coming several times (Mark 13:33, Matthew 24:26–27, 24:44, John 14:3). However, his followers will and do not know the day when he will come (Mark 13:35, Matthew 25:13).

In summary, we can conclude that Jesus’ intention during his earthly ministry was to demonstrate God’s love, seek and save the lost, proclaim the kingdom of God, and provide salvation through his death and resurrection, reconciling humanity to God and bringing eternal life to those who believe in him. Jesus’ intentions reveal his goals, and in a broad sense, we may conclude that the “gospel,” the “Good News,” includes all these things that Jesus preached and did.

## Chapter 5

### Preparation for Analysis: Gospel Words

Given that a precise understanding of the concepts involved in the NPP versus the Reformers debate is closely related to one’s understanding of the gospel with its usage and proclamation, this study focuses on identifying the various gospel-related words in the New Testament and examining their usage by the biblical authors.

#### The gospel words: overview

In the following sections, I plan to explore different gospel words used by the Biblical authors in the New Testament. First, I will give an overview of the historical background of these words, then I will examine their use in the New Testament and the Septuagint. Finally, I will analyze the meanings of the gospel words in the New Testament. As D. A. Carson notes, the bare-bones list of word usages could easily be considered a boring list, but I strongly agree with his comment that “some of the nonsense about what the gospel is today turns on not having worked through the way the word-group is actually used.”<sup>73</sup>

The Greek word εὐαγγέλιον, meaning “gospel,” is a compound form of the adverb εὖ, “well,” and most likely the noun ἄγγελος, “messenger.”<sup>74</sup> To understand the meaning

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<sup>73</sup> D. A. Carson, “What Is the Gospel?—Revisited,” in *For the Fame of God’s Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper*, ed. Sam Storms and Justin Taylor, with G. K. Beale et al. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 155.

<sup>74</sup> Patrick Schreiner, “The Meaning of Εὐαγγέλιον: Lexical and Tradition-Historical Explorations,” in *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: Theological Essays*, ed. Douglas J. Moo et al. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Academic, 2023), 88.

of this word thoroughly, we need to review its usage in Ancient Near Eastern, Old Testament, Greco-Roman, and extra-Biblical contexts, as well as its background.

Regarding the Ancient Near Eastern background, Akkadian has the forms *bussuru/passuru*, meaning “to bring a message (news).”<sup>75</sup> Another form is in Akkadian, the *bussurtu*, which means “message (news).”<sup>76</sup> It is interesting to note that the word was *neutral* in Akkadian, meaning any kind of news, and other added terms make it “bad news” (*bussurat lumnim*), “good news” (*bussurat dumqim*) or “joyful news” (*bussurat ḥadê*).<sup>77</sup> However, in Ugaritic, the verb means to “bring glad tidings.”<sup>78</sup>

Concerning the Old Testament background<sup>79</sup>, there is a consensus among scholars that the rise of the verb εὐαγγελίζω is related to the Hebrew word בִּשָׂר (bîsar) in the Old Testament.<sup>80</sup> The root בִּשָׂר occurs 30 times in the Old Testament (14 times as a finite verb in the piel).<sup>81</sup> It is mainly related to *political and/or military contexts*. For example, when the Philistines cut off Saul’s head in 1 Sam 31:9 (LXX) and also in 1 Chronicles 10:9

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<sup>75</sup>O. Schilling, “בִּשָׂר; בִּשְׂרָה beśôrâh good news,” in G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 2:313.

<sup>76</sup> O. Schilling, “בִּשָׂר; בִּשְׂרָה beśôrâh good news,” in Botterweck and Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 2:313.

<sup>77</sup> O. Schilling, “בִּשָׂר; בִּשְׂרָה beśôrâh good news,” in Botterweck and Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 2:313.

<sup>78</sup> Schreiner, “The Meaning of Εὐαγγέλιον: Lexical and Tradition-Historical Explorations,” 90.

<sup>79</sup> Gerhard Friedrich, “Εὐαγγελίζομαι, Εὐαγγέλιον, Προεὐαγγελίζομαι, Εὐαγγελιστής,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 2:707–37.

<sup>80</sup> John P. Dickson, *Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities: The Shape, Extent, and Background of Early Christian Mission*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 2/159 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 153–77.

<sup>81</sup> O. Schilling, “בִּשָׂר; בִּשְׂרָה beśôrâh good news,” in Botterweck and Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 2:313.

(LXX), they sent this “good news” to all the Philistines. This event is also referred to in 2 Samuel 1:20 (LXX), 2 Samuel 4:10 (LXX), and 2 Samuel 18:19-31 (LXX) with a similar meaning but from Israel’s point of view. For example, in 2 Samuel 4:10 (LXX), we read as David speaks, “when one told me, ‘Behold, Saul is dead,’ and thought he was bringing good news [εὐαγγελιζόμενος], I seized him and killed him at Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news [εὐαγγέλια].” In the books of the Prophets, we can read about similar usage, i.e., the prophets used it in the context of *political and military victory*.<sup>82</sup> However, the most important connection to the New Testament usage is how the prophet Isaiah used it.<sup>83</sup> Isaiah used it as *God’s return to establish his rule, bring back his people from exile, and shepherding them* (Isaiah 40:9–11). Moreover, he refers to the one who brings the good news with the words “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns’” (Isaiah 52:7). The closest New Testament connection (Luke 4:18–19) of the word can probably be found in Isaiah 61:1: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.” Schreiner notes, “The Isaianic gospel, therefore, pertains to Israel’s national salvation through their Messiah who will return them to their land and restore the fortunes of their kingdom.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Schreiner, “The Meaning of Εὐαγγέλιον: Lexical and Tradition-Historical Explorations,” 90.

<sup>83</sup> See also Nahum 1:15 (2:1 in MT and LXX).

<sup>84</sup> Schreiner, “The Meaning of Εὐαγγέλιον: Lexical and Tradition-Historical Explorations,” 92.

In the Greco-Roman background, the word occurs in classical Greek (e.g., in Homer, Isocrates, Diodorus, Xenophon, Plutarch, and Aristophanes), and mostly, but not exclusively, it means the *messenger's rewards*.<sup>85</sup> Dickson shows that the reward is also tightly tied to bringing the news, mainly in a *political context*.<sup>86</sup> Schreiner summarizes, “What readers find in the Greco-Roman literature and inscriptions, is that ‘gospel’ is regularly associated with ‘news’ and news more particularly of military victory and or with the news of an emperor’s birth or their accession.”<sup>87</sup>

Just prior to the New Testament period, we find several uses of the word in writers like Diodorus Siculus, Marcus Tullius Cicero, and Paullus Fabius Maximus. Cicero, who was writing in Latin, used the Greek word twice in his *Letters to Atticus* around 45 BC. An example: “Is that so? Does Brutus really say that Caesar is going over to the right party? That is good news [εὐαγγέλια].”<sup>88</sup>

In addition, the extra-Biblical use of the word in the New Testament period also confirms its use as “good news,” e.g., Josephus wrote in *The Wars of the Jews*, “Now this terrible message was good news [εὐαγγέλιον] to Florus; and because his design was to have a war kindled, he gave the ambassadors no answer at all.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Schreiner, “The Meaning of Εὐαγγελιον: Lexical and Tradition-Historical Explorations,” 92.

<sup>86</sup> John Dickson, “Gospel as News: Εὐαγγελ- from Aristophanes to the Apostle Paul,” *New Testament Studies* 51 (2005): 212–13.

<sup>87</sup> Schreiner, “The Meaning of Εὐαγγελιον: Lexical and Tradition-Historical Explorations,” 94.

<sup>88</sup> M. Tullius Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 13.40.1, <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.02.0008>.

<sup>89</sup> Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 2.417, <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D1%3Asection%3D1>.

Summarizing the background of the word εὐαγγέλιον, it was an *announcement of a message* in the ancient world. In most cases, this was a *positive, favorable message* mainly related to *political or military victory*. The word's usage did not change much in the Greco-Roman literature and the Old Testament. However, in the Old Testament, this good message is connected to Yahweh's victory and his servant (especially in Isaiah) as the *announcement of the reign of Yahweh through his servant to restore Israel*.

After this background summary, I analyze the occurrences of gospel (εὐαγγέλιον, εὐαγγελίζω, εὐαγγελιστής, and προεσαγγελίζομαι) in the New Testament and the Septuagint,<sup>90</sup> paying special attention to their occurrences in Acts, Paul's letters, and the Pillars.<sup>91</sup> The noun "gospel" εὐαγγέλιον occurs *76 times* in the New Testament and only *once* in the Septuagint. The word's distribution in different New Testament books is shown in Figure 1.

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<sup>90</sup> Logos Bible Software, *Logos Bible Software*, v. 36.1.6, Logos 9, Faithlife Corporation, released 2024.

<sup>91</sup> I consider James, Peter and John as Pillars (Galatian 2:9) and I also include Jude the brother of James and half-brother of Jesus in this group.

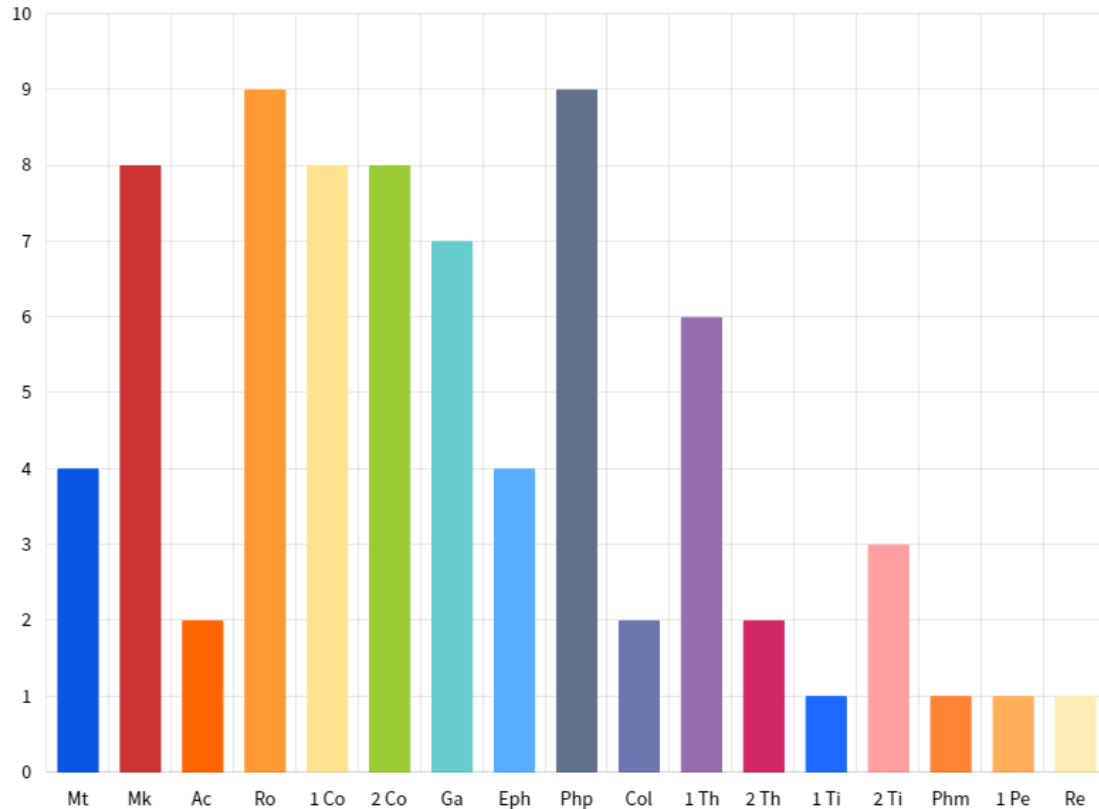


Figure 1 The distribution of εὐαγγέλιον in the New Testament

It is important to note that *sixty* occurrences (79%) can be found in Paul’s letters, and the word occurs only *twelve times* (26%) in the Gospels. So it seems that D. A. Carson rightly says that “it is a distinctively (though not an exclusively) Pauline word.”<sup>92</sup>

The verb “preach/proclaim the gospel” εὐαγγελίζω occurs *54 times* in the New Testament and *23 times* in the Septuagint. The New Testament distribution of this verb is shown in Figure 2. This verb occurs most frequently in Acts, *15 times* (28%).

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<sup>92</sup> Carson, “What Is the Gospel?—Revisited,” 150.

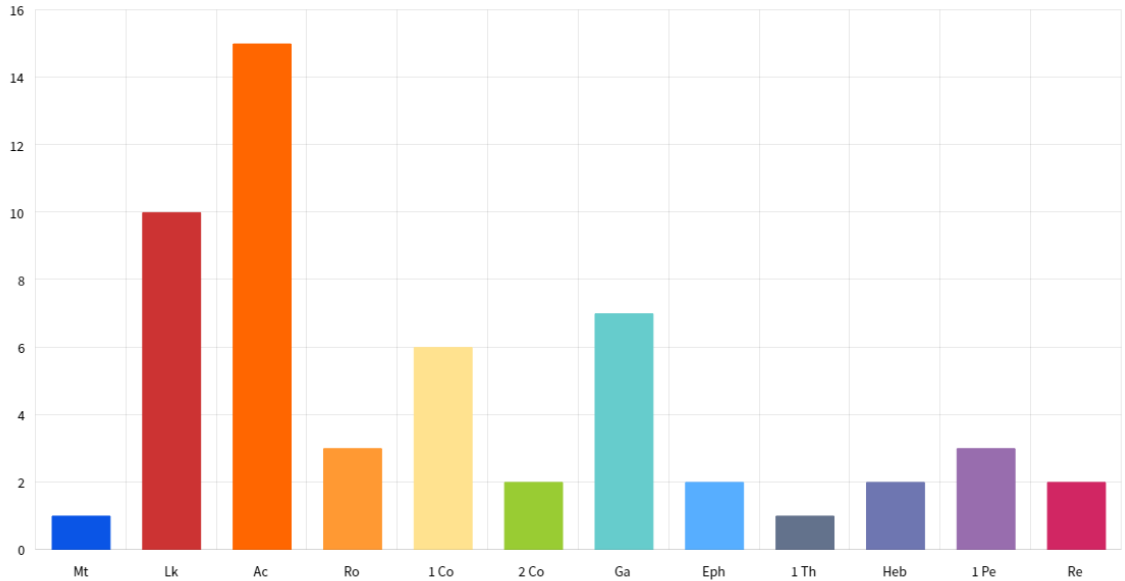


Figure 2 The distribution of εὐαγγελίζω in the New Testament

The noun “evangelist” or “one who preaches/proclaims the gospel” εὐαγγελιστής occurs *three times* in the New Testament (Acts, Ephesians, 2 Timothy), and it has *no occurrence* in the Septuagint. The noun “to convey the gospel formerly” προεὐαγγελίζομαι, occurs only once in the New Testament in Galatians, and it has no occurrences in the Septuagint. The investigated gospel occurrences are summarized in Table 2. In this Table “Paul” and “Pillars” represent the total number of occurrences in the Pauline letters and in the letters of the Pillars, respectively.

**Table 2 The occurrences of the gospel words**

Word	Form	Meaning	LXX	NT	Gospels	Acts	Paul	Pillars
εὐαγγέλιον	noun	gospel, good news	1 <sup>93</sup>	76	12	2	60	1(2) <sup>94</sup>
εὐαγγελίζω	verb	to preach/ proclaim the gospel	23	54 <sup>95</sup>	11	15	21	3(5)
εὐαγγελιστής	noun	evangelist, one who preaches/ proclaims the gospel	-	3	-	1	2	-
προεπαγγελίζομαι	verb	to convey the gospel formerly	-	1	-	-	1	-

By focusing on separate Gospel books, we can get a more detailed picture, as depicted in Table 3 presenting the occurrences of the Gospel words in the four Gospels.

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<sup>93</sup> There is also five occurrences of the noun εὐαγγελία only in the Septuagint.

<sup>94</sup> I indicated the number of occurrences in the Pillars' letters excluding Revelation (only with Johannine Epistles), and also with Revelation in brackets (with the whole Johannine literature).

<sup>95</sup> Two occurrences are in Hebrew, which are not indicated in the categories of the Table.

**Table 3 The occurrences of the gospel words in the four Gospels**

Word	Form	Meaning	NT	Gospels	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
εὐαγγέλιον	noun	gospel, good news	76	12	4	8	-	-
εὐαγγελίζω	verb	to preach/ proclaim the gospel	54	11	1	-	10	-
εὐαγγελιστής	noun	evangelist, one who preaches/ proclaims the gospel	3	-	-	-	-	-
προεὐαγγελίζομαι	verb	to convey the gospel formerly	1	-	-	-	-	-

I also intend to provide an overview of the general meaning of the gospel in the New Testament, based on the Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline corpus. The detailed investigation of the meaning of the gospel words in the Gospels is given after this discussion.

As I have already noted, most likely the closest connection of εὐαγγέλιον in the New Testament to the Old Testament can be found in Isaiah 61:1. The early Christian proclamation about the Messiah can be derived from this verse, i.e., it is about the prophetic

vision of the Messiah who will bring good news in the last days.<sup>96</sup> Isaiah includes all important elements of the good news: *healings* (Isaiah 35:5), the *good news* (Isaiah 61:1), and the *resurrection of the dead* (Isaiah 26:19). Jesus saw himself as the One Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 61:1:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him (Luke 4:16–20).

Matthew records that Jesus’ main message was “the gospel of the kingdom” (Matthew 4:23; 9:35), the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy (Isaiah 35:5; 61:1) and its proclamation to the nations until the end (Matt 24:14; 26:13).<sup>97</sup> Mark considers Jesus’ life as “gospel” including his life, death, and resurrection (Mark 1:1) and similarly like Matthew he sees Jesus’ message as “the gospel of God” (Mark 1:14–15). Luke uses the term to summarize Jesus’ teachings as the “good news of the kingdom of God” (Luke 4:43).

Acts presents the “gospel” as the message that the early church preached (Acts 5:42; 8:12, 25, 35, 40; 10:36; 11:20; 13:32; 14:7; 14:15, 21; 15:7, 35; 16:10; 17:18; 20:24).

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<sup>96</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023), 377.

<sup>97</sup> Schreiner, “The Meaning of Εὐαγγέλιον: Lexical and Tradition-Historical Explorations,” 93.

Schreiner notes that “there seems to be a slight shift in that previously the gospel was something Jesus proclaimed, and now its object is Jesus (5:42; 8:12, 25, 35; 10:36;11:20; 17:18).”<sup>98</sup>

Paul used the word extensively, and his meaning includes not only the content but the proclamation of the message.<sup>99</sup> Paul’s most detailed description of the “gospel” is in 1 Corinthians 15:1–7, where Paul connects the “gospel” to the Scriptures and focuses on the death and resurrection of Jesus:

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

In summary, we can conclude that New Testament authors *reconfigure* the meaning of the “gospel” word regarding *how it is accomplished, to whom it is offered*, and also its *scope*.<sup>100</sup> The differences in the meaning of the “gospel” compared to its prior attested

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<sup>98</sup> Schreiner, “The Meaning of Ευαγγελιον: Lexical and Tradition-Historical Explorations,” 93.

<sup>99</sup> Schreiner, “The Meaning of Ευαγγελιον: Lexical and Tradition-Historical Explorations,” 94.

<sup>100</sup> Schreiner, “The Meaning of Ευαγγελιον: Lexical and Tradition-Historical Explorations,” 98.

meanings (Ancient Near Eastern, Old Testament, Greco-Roman) are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4 How the meaning of the gospel changed**

	<b>Historical</b>	<b>New Testament</b>
How is the gospel accomplished?	By military power (subduing the enemies)	By Christ's sacrifice and submission (Christ allows himself to be subdued)
To whom is the gospel offered?	To the people of the winner	To all
What is the scope of the gospel?	The empire of the winner	The whole world (cosmic)

### **The gospel words in the Gospels**

In this section, I analyze<sup>101</sup> all occurrences of the gospel words in the Gospels. The distribution of the 23 occurrences of gospel words is shown in Table 3. It is interesting to note that the εὐαγγελιστής and προεὐαγγελίζομαι never occur in any of the Gospels. They only occur in the Pauline corpus, see Table 2. It is also remarkable that there are no gospel words in John. The noun εὐαγγέλιον occurs four times in Matthew and eight times in Mark, but it does not occur in either Luke or John. Moreover, the verb εὐαγγελίζω occurs only once in Matthew and ten times in Luke. It does not occur in Mark or John. The complete

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<sup>101</sup> I use the NA28 Greek text with the ESV English translation.

list of these gospel words with discussions can be found in Appendix A, and the principal findings are summarized below.

We have 23 occurrences of the gospel words used in very different contexts, and depending on their specific context, these refer to different things.

More precisely, the gospel words label a set of “messages” it conveys, and in different contexts, different subsets of these “messages” are referred to. Moreover, in almost all cases, there is a linking element (word or expression) to the gospel words, which makes clear the emphasized subset actually referred to.

I summarize in Table 5 all 23 occurrences of the gospel words, along with the most important related elements that are emphasized in the context of each specific gospel word, and direct us to identify the referred subsets.

We can derive some important conclusions from these results. First, the gospel words are closely related to the concepts of “preaching” or “proclamation” (17 times). This is probably the most important conclusion we can make based on these results, i.e., *the gospel message cannot be separated from its preaching.*

**Table 5 The relationships of gospel words in the Gospels**

verse	proclamation	kingdom of God	Jesus' birth	poor	healing	genre	generality
Matthew 4:23	X	X			X		
Matthew 9:35	X	X			X		
Matthew 11:5	X			X			
Matthew 24:14	X	X					X
Matthew 26:13	X						X
Mark 1:1						X	
Mark 1:14	X						
Mark 1:15		X					
Mark 8:35							X
Mark 10:29							X
Mark 13:10	X						X
Mark 14:9	X						X
Mark 16:15	X						X
Luke 1:19			X <sup>102</sup>				
Luke 2:10			X				
Luke 3:18	X						
Luke 4:18	X			X	X		
Luke 4:43	X	X					
Luke 7:22	X			X	X		
Luke 8:1	X	X					
Luke 9:6	X				X		
Luke 16:16	X	X					
Luke 20:1	X						

Second, the preaching of the gospel is also strongly related to the concept of the “kingdom of God” (7 times). This supports our conclusion that, in most cases, the content of the preached gospel is *the kingdom of God*. It does not mean that in other cases “gospel” is not exactly synonymous with “kingdom of God.” It just means that in these cases, we have direct proof from the text that the “kingdom of God” was preached in connection with the gospel.

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<sup>102</sup> Indirect connection to the birth of Jesus because Luke 1:19 refers to the birth of John.

Third, the message of the gospel is also related to *healing* (five times) and to the *poor* (three times). Again, it does not mean that in the other cases the message is not related to healing and to the poor, but in these cases the text explicitly mentions these elements, so these are the ones that are emphasized with the gospel in those situations.

Fourth, the fact that various dimensions of the gospel’s universality—such as its geographical reach and its extension to all people groups—are affirmed on seven separate occasions allows us to infer, with considerable confidence, the general and all-encompassing nature of the gospel, which is called in this study as the *generality of the gospel*.

### **The gospel words in the letters of the Pillars**

In this section, I analyze<sup>103</sup> all occurrences of the gospel words in the letters of the Pillars. There are only four occurrences in the first letter of Peter (three times in the verb form of εὐαγγελίζω and only once in the noun form of εὐαγγέλιον). There are no occurrences of any of the gospel words in the second letter of Peter, in the Johannine letters, in James, and in Jude.

The list and discussions of these gospel words can be found in Appendix B. We can conclude that in all of the four occurrences the gospel is the “good news” that was preached by the Apostles—in all four cases it relates to the “preaching,” which is explicitly stated in the text in three cases (1 Peter 1:12, 25; 4:6), while in one case it is assumed since it is about “obeying the gospel” (1 Peter 4:17). Peter uses gospel words in relation to the

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<sup>103</sup> I use the NA28 Greek text with the ESV English translation.

announcements of the prophets in two cases (1 Peter 1:12, 25) and in relation to the coming judgment in the other two cases (1 Peter 4:6, 17), see Table 6.

**Table 6 The relationships of gospel words in the letters of the Pillars**

<b>verse</b>	<b>proclamation</b>	<b>prophecies</b>	<b>judgment</b>
<b>1 Peter 1:12</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>1 Peter 1:25</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>1 Peter 4:6</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>1 Peter 4:17</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>

## Chapter 6

### **Preparation for Analysis: Gospel Concepts in the Letters of the Pillars**

In this chapter, I study gospel concepts that could reveal a broader scope about the gospel than a mere word study of one major gospel related Greek word group can uncover. After summarizing my methodology and definition about what the gospel concept is, I present my findings in the Petrine epistles, in the Johannine epistles, in James and in Jude. In addition, I also discuss three important specific gospel concepts: the kingdom of God, justification by faith, and the person of Jesus Christ.

#### **The gospel concept: methodology**

The word study of the gospel can show us the direct pointers to understand the gospel, but the gospel is much bigger than a mere word study of one major Greek word group can discover. My aim is in the following to research for *kerygmatic clues*. There are two important questions we must define before starting such a study: (1) how to define the kerygmatic clues? (2) how to define the method to find them. In other words, what is the *object of the research*, and what is the *methodology of the research*? In this section, I provide an overview of my answer to the question of methodology. First, I restrict my study to the letters of the Pillars.

There are many relational concepts that could help. Direct *quotations* can give the strongest link between the gospel concepts of the Pillars' letters and the other parts of the New Testament, if there is any.

Regarding *allusions*, it is not easy to establish a precise definition, but Holman gives this definition:

A figure of speech that makes brief, often casual, reference to a historical, or literary figure, event or object. (...) Strictly speaking allusion is always indirect. It attempts to tap the knowledge and memory of the reader and by so doing to secure a resonant emotional effect from the associations already existing in the reader's mind. (...) The effectiveness of allusion depends on there being a common body of knowledge shared by writer and reader.<sup>104</sup>

A strongly related concept is the *echo*. Even though Porter questions the necessity of the concept because of the difficulty of distinguishing it from allusion, it could be helpful since “the notion of echo may be used for the invocation by means of thematically related language of some more general notion or concept.”<sup>105</sup>

Since the exact identification of the allusion and echo can be blurry, I use the following working definition of *parallel*, similar to how Alkema used it:<sup>106</sup>

**I analyze the text of the letters of the Pillars to find “expressions, remarks, and ideas that seem to be formulated in the way that they have been because there is a passage” in the New Testament “containing similar expressions, remarks or ideas.”<sup>107</sup>**

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<sup>104</sup> C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature: Based on the Original Edition by William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Education Pub, 1980), 12.

<sup>105</sup> Stanley E. Porter, “Allusions and Echoes,” in *As It Is Written: Studying Paul's Use of Scripture*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Stanley, (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 39.

<sup>106</sup> Roelof Klaas Alkema, “The Pillars and the Cornerstone: Jesus Tradition Parallels in the Catholic Epistles” (Doctoral Thesis, Theologische Universiteit Kampen, 2018), 34, <https://theoluniv.ub.rug.nl/116/>.

<sup>107</sup> Alkema, “The Pillars and the Cornerstone,” 34.

To search for parallels, I use the criteria set by Alkema<sup>108</sup> adapted to my case, using four categories: verbal agreement, propositional agreement, conceptual analogy, and accessibility.

1. **Verbal agreement:** are there words also used in the parallel passage?

A verbal agreement can mark a parallel, and this is the lowest level, most obvious textual data we can check. However, verbal agreement alone could be misleading since a possible agreement may result from a chance occurrence.

2. **Propositional agreement:** is the propositional value of a passage similar?

Propositional agreement is the next level to be checked when similar ideas are compared. It could also be misleading if applied alone since similar ideas can be based on different discourses without any relationship.

3. **Conceptual analogy:** is the parallel passage in the Pillars in line with other passages expressing gospel messages in the New Testament?

The conceptual analogy is similar to a propositional agreement but goes beyond the specific idea identified, and it aims to capture the similarities between the authors' overall arguments. Of course, the strongest dependency can be identified if we have a combination of verbal, propositional, and conceptual agreements. This can rule out possible misidentifications.

4. **Accessibility:** is it likely that the author of the letter (and preferably also his readers) would have had access to the source?

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<sup>108</sup> Alkema, "The Pillars and the Cornerstone," 34.

This is also a helpful criterion, which could help to establish the possible dependencies between the texts under investigation. In most cases, because of the lack of information, this is rather a possibility check than proof of accessibility.

### **The gospel concept: definition**

The previous section summarized the method of comparison (how), and this section summarizes the object of comparison (what), i.e., the kerygmatic clues. How can we define these kerygmatic clues?

Lockett argues that “we should view the Catholic Epistles as a canonical collection alongside of the Gospels and Pauline Corpus.”<sup>109</sup> It seems that the coherence of the Canonical Epistles<sup>110</sup> and the relationships between the Canonical Epistles are recognized by scholars,<sup>111</sup> but what about the gospels they present?

Gathercole declares that there is a unity between the gospel presented by Paul and the evangelists, but this unity is not by finding some equivalences (e.g., the “righteousness of God” in the Pauline gospel equals to “the kingdom of God” by the Synoptics), but rather that “the unity of their presentations of the gospel can be seen in the broad outlines of these three key themes: (1) the identity of Jesus as Messiah, (2) his work of atoning sacrifice and justification, and (3) his inauguration of a new dominion.”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Darian R. Lockett, “What Do James, Peter, John, and Jude Have In Common? Arguing for the Canonical Collection of the Catholic Epistles,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 24, no. 3 (2020): 138.

<sup>110</sup> Darian R. Lockett, *Letters from the Pillar Apostles: The Formation of the Catholic Epistles as a Canonical Collection* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 231.

<sup>111</sup> Lockett, “What Do James, Peter, John, and Jude Have in Common?,” 126–34.

<sup>112</sup> Simon J. Gathercole, “The Gospel of Paul and the Gospel of the Kingdom,” in *God’s Power to Save*, ed. Chris Green (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 154.

I derive the definition of the gospel concept based on the recognition that *the preached apostolic gospel or kerygma existed before the writing of the New Testament*. As Gathercole summarizes: “it may sound odd to put it in this way, in an important sense, a ‘canon’ – in the sense of a widely held standard of teaching – *preceded* the composition of the Gospels” [emphasis original].<sup>113</sup> What was the content of this kerygma? In this study—in line with the excellent study of Gathercole<sup>114</sup>—the components of this kerygma, are drawn from the summary of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

**I define any concept to be a gospel concept if it consists of any of these kerygma components and/or is strongly related to these component:**

- 1. Jesus’ messiahship,**
- 2. Jesus’ death for sins,**
- 3. Jesus’ resurrection, and**
- 4. Jesus’ fulfillment of the Scriptures.**

For example, justification by faith is not part of the above list, but the component of “Jesus’ death for sins” is strongly related to this concept, elaborated in detail in Paul’s letters, resulting in the “justification by faith” as a candidate for the gospel concept.

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<sup>113</sup> Simon J. Gathercole, *The Gospel and the Gospels: Christian Proclamation and Early Jesus Books* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022), 14.

<sup>114</sup> Gathercole, *The Gospel and the Gospels*, 36.

## The gospel concepts in the Petrine epistles

First, I focus on the letters of Peter and reveal how Peter understood the gospel in relation to the other authors of the New Testament. The details of the study can be found in Appendix C and I summarize my findings in Table 7.

**Table 7 Gospel concepts in the Petrine letters**

<b>Gospel concept</b>	<b>Verse 1</b>	<b>Verse 2</b>	<b>verbal agreement</b>	<b>propositional agreement</b>	<b>conceptual analogy</b>	<b>access-ibility</b>
“born again”	1 Peter 1:3 1 Peter 1:23 (ἀναγεννάω)	John 3:3 John 3:7 (γεννάω)	X	X	X	X
“blood of Christ”	1 Peter 1:2 1 Peter 1:19 (αἷμα)	1 Cor 10:16 Eph 2:13 (αἷμα)	X	X	X	
“saved through faith”	1 Peter 1:5 “being guarded through faith for a salvation”	Eph 2:8 “you have been saved through faith”		X	X	
the great exchange	1 Peter 2:22–24 “He committed no sin” “He himself bore our sins”	2 Cor 5:21 “who knew no sin” “he made him to be sin” “become the		X	X	

	“live to righteousness”	righteousness of God”				
Christ died for our sins	1 Peter 3:18 “Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous” “who was delivered up for our trespasses”	Rom 4:25 “he might bring us to God” “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”		X	X	
common faith	2 Peter 1:1 “a faith of equal standing with ours”	Rom 1:12 “each other’s faith, both yours and mine” Titus 1:4 “common faith”		X	X	

The results demonstrate that there are a number of strong parallels of the gospel concepts between the Petrine epistles and the other parts of the New Testament. I showed several examples of connection to John and also to several letters of Paul. My aim was not to show all possible connections, because there are so many depending on the level of dependencies we choose. For example, if we just look at the word “Christian”

(Χριστιανός), there are only three occurrences of this word in the New Testament; one is in 1 Peter 4:16 (the other two are in Acts 11:26 and 26:28).

In addition, I made Table 8 to demonstrate how *all of the four kerygma components*,<sup>115</sup> which are subsets of the gospel concepts defined in the previous section, are present in 1 Peter.

**Table 8 Kerygma components in 1 Peter**

Jesus' Messianship	"Christ" is the dominant title of Jesus (Christ: 23 times, Jesus: 9 times, Lord: 8 times); preexistence of the Messiah (1 Peter 1:20)
Jesus' death for sins	1 Peter 1:2, 18–19; 2:21, 24; 3:18; 4:1–2
Jesus' resurrection	1 Peter 1:3, 21; 2:23; 3:18, 21, 22
Jesus' fulfillment of Scripture	1 Peter 1:10–12

It can be concluded that 1 Peter contains all of the four kerygma components.

### **The gospel concepts in the Johannine epistles**

In this section I study the parallels between the Johannine epistles and the rest of the New Testament regarding gospel concepts. The details of the study can be found in Appendix D and I summarize my findings in Table 9.

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<sup>115</sup> Gathercole, *The Gospel and the Gospels*, 61–64.

**Table 9 Gospel concepts in the Johannine epistles**

<b>Gospel concept</b>	<b>Verse 1</b>	<b>Verse 2</b>	<b>verbal agreement</b>	<b>propositional agreement</b>	<b>conceptual analogy</b>	<b>accessibility</b>
propitiation	1 John 2:2 “propitiation”	Romans 3:25 “propitiation”	X	X	X	
Christ in the flesh	1 John 4:2 2 John 7 “coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh”	Col 1:22 “his body of flesh”		X	X	
saving act of God	1 John 4:9 “love of God was made manifest among us” “God sent his only Son into the world” “we might live through him”	John 3:16 “God so loved the world” “he gave his only Son” “whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life”	X	X	X	

truth	3 John 1, 8  “truth”	Eph1:13;  2 Tim 2:15  “the word of truth”		X	X	
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The results show that the Johannine epistles (I showed examples from all three epistles, even from the tiny 3 John!) contain gospel concepts in line with the use of such concepts in other parts of the New Testament. Most of my examples relate to the Pauline letters (see below), since they are so rich in gospel concepts.

### **The gospel concepts in James**

This section focuses on James and my aim is to find gospel concepts. Despite that the “sparse christological content of James remains an enigma”<sup>116</sup> for many scholars, the letter clearly witnesses about the gospel. The details of the study can be found in Appendix E and my finding are summarized in Table 10.

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<sup>116</sup> Robert W. Wall, *Community of the Wise: The Letter of James* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 28.

**Table 10 Gospel concepts in James**

<b>Gospel concept</b>	<b>Verse 1</b>	<b>Verse 2</b>	<b>verbal agreement</b>	<b>propositional agreement</b>	<b>conceptual analogy</b>	<b>accessibility</b>
faith in Christ	James 2:1 “the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory”	Acts 20:21 “faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,” 1 Cor 2:8 “the Lord of glory”	X	X	X	
coming of the Lord	James 5:7-9 “coming of the Lord”	1 Thess 4:15 “coming of the Lord”	X	X	X	

I also mention that Wall puts the themes of James in a narrative shape as a “pattern of salvation”: “(1) the sovereign God, who is able to save and to destroy, (2) who sends forth the word of truth, (3) which saves those who receive it in anticipation of (4) the coming triumph of God’s reign.”<sup>117</sup> Such a straightforward reading could also support that the gospel message is in the background when we read James.

In concluding this section, various examples show that there are gospel concepts present in James like in the letters of Paul or in the Acts of Luke.

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<sup>117</sup> Wall, *Community of the Wise*, 28.

## The gospel concepts in Jude

In this section, I study the gospel concepts in Jude. The details of the study can be found in Appendix F and my findings are summarized in Table 11.

**Table 11 Gospel concepts in Jude**

Gospel concept	Verse 1	Verse 2	verbal agreement	propositional agreement	conceptual analogy	accessibility
common salvation	Jude 3 “common salvation,” Jude 20 “your most holy faith,”	Titus 1:4 “common faith,” 2 Peter 1:1 “a faith of equal standing with ours”		X	X	

We can conclude that even the short letter of Jude contains gospel concepts.

In this section, I constructed a methodological framework and provided a precise definition of the gospel concept. On this basis, I presented my findings focusing on the Pillar letters. The results indicate that gospel concepts are present throughout all the epistles of the Pillar Apostles, demonstrating a notable theological coherence among them.

## Chapter 7

### Preparation for Analysis: Specific Gospel Concepts

In the previous chapter, my research on the gospel concepts was presented based on my gospel concept methodology. In this section, I focus on key gospel concepts derived from the results of my word study.

#### The kingdom of God in the Gospels

My word study showed that the most important expression linked to the gospel in the Gospels is the “kingdom of God.” This is the first candidate, being a gospel concept, strongly related to the “messiahship” and the “fulfillment of the Scriptures” components of our definition. First, I focus on the study of this phrase.

The word βασιλεία (kingdom) occurs 162 times in the Gospels with this distribution:

	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
<b>Number of occurrences</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>5</b>

The phrase βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ (kingdom of God) occurs 53 times in the Gospels with this distribution:

	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
<b>Number of occurrences</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2</b>

The phrase βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (kingdom of heaven) occurs 32 times in the Gospels with this distribution:

	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
<b>Number of occurrences</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Since Matthew prefers the phrase “kingdom of heaven,” with the same meaning as “kingdom of God,” and the “kingdom of heaven” has no occurrences in other Gospels, we can consider the common set of occurrences of “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven.” The common set of the phrases βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ (kingdom of God) and βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (kingdom of heaven) occurs 85 times in the Gospels with this distribution:

	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
<b>Number of occurrences</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2</b>

In addition, I mention that the βασιλεία τοῦ πατρὸς (kingdom of the Father) occurs twice (Matthew 6:10; 26:29) and βασιλεία σου (your kingdom) occurs four times (two times with respect to Jesus (Matthew 20:21; Luke 23:42), and two times with respect to God (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2)).

In order to understand the concept of the “kingdom of God,” five important formulations can be identified:<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Schnabel, *New Testament Theology*, 197.

- “The kingdom of God has come near” (Matthew 4:17; 10:7; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:11)
- “The kingdom of God is coming/will come” (Matthew 6:10; 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27; 11:2; 17:20)
- “Entering the kingdom of God” (Matthew 5:20; 7:21; 18:3; Matthew 18:9; 19:23, 24, Mark 9:47; 10:23, 24, 25; Luke 18:24, 25)
- “The kingdom of God has come to you” (Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20)
- “The kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:21)

Regarding these expressions (especially the first two), several scholars (e.g., Schweitzer, Bultmann, Allison) consider that the “kingdom of God” will come only in the future. However, most scholars support the view that the “kingdom of God” is both the present and the future (e.g., Weder, Goppelt, Schürmann, Ladd).<sup>119</sup> In this view, “The kingdom is now and not yet.”<sup>120</sup>

Another important observation related to the “kingdom of God” is that the relevant Gospel statements are strongly coupled to the *announcement of this kingdom* (i.e., “the time is fulfilled” (Mark 1:15) and “the kingdom of God has come near” (see examples above), and to the *call for repentance* (Matthew 3:2; 4:17). This call is presented by two imperatives in the Gospels: μετανοεῖτε “repent” and πιστεῦετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ “believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15).<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Schnabel, *New Testament Theology*, 198.

<sup>120</sup> Darrell L. Bock and Benjamin I. Simpson, *Jesus According to Scripture: Restoring the Portrait from the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 98.

<sup>121</sup> Schnabel, *New Testament Theology*, 202.

Jesus was teaching about the “kingdom of God” in parables. Especially, Matthew 13 can be called “The kingdom Chapter,” where all parables teach important lessons about this kingdom:

- The Sower (Matthew 13:1–23; Mark 4:1–20; Luke 8:4–15)
  - Lesson: The kingdom grows differently in people’s hearts depending on how they receive the word.
- The Weeds (Tares) among the Wheat (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)
  - Lesson: Good and evil will coexist until the final judgment, when God will separate them.
- The Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19)
  - Lesson: The kingdom of God starts small but grows into something unexpectedly large and impactful.
- The Yeast (Leaven) (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21)
  - Lesson: The kingdom’s influence spreads quietly but transforms everything it touches.
- The Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44)
  - Lesson: The kingdom is so valuable that it’s worth giving up everything to gain it.
- The Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45-46)
  - Lesson: Like a priceless pearl, the kingdom is worth sacrificing all else to obtain.
- The Net (Matthew 13:47-50)

- Lesson: At the end of the age, God will separate the righteous from the wicked like fishermen sorting fish.
- The Householder (Matthew 13:52)
  - Lesson: A true disciple understands and applies both old and new truths about the kingdom.

Finally, it is important to notice that “*Jesus believed that the kingdom of God was breaking into history [emphasis original].*”<sup>122</sup> It is clearly seen as Jesus explains it: “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has already overtaken you” (Matthew 12:28).

Moreover, it can be seen from Jesus’ answer to John the Baptist in Luke 7:22-23 that Jesus was preaching himself as the completion of Israel’s story.<sup>123</sup> In other words, *Jesus considered that the kingdom of God was breaking into history in himself!*

In summary, the “kingdom of God/heaven” is an important concept mainly discussed in the Synoptics. This is so strongly related to the gospel that I would not dare to separate the two. The kingdom of God has already arrived (present), but it is still yet to come (future). The nature of this kingdom is explained by Jesus in detail, mainly by using parables. However, *the essence of the kingdom of God is Jesus himself, as the completion of Israel’s story.*

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<sup>122</sup> Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 112.

<sup>123</sup> McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel*, 115.

## Justification by faith in the Gospels

Since in my gospel concept definition the component of “Jesus’ death for sins” is strongly related to the *justification by faith* message emphasized in Paul’s letters, the next candidate for a gospel concept is the concept of “justification by faith.” I focus on this concept in the canonical Gospels in this section.

The canonical Gospels do not present the concept of “justification of faith” explicitly, similar to what we can find in the Pauline corpus, but they exhibit terms and statements that can be directly linked to it. For example, forgiveness is granted on the basis of faith, as seen in Mark 2:5 (also in Matthew 9:2 and Luke 5:20).

The most explicit connection can be found in the story in Luke 18:14, where Jesus uses δεδικαιωμένος (perfect, passive participle of the verb δικαίω) to describe a man walking away as justified (κατέβη οὗτος δεδικαιωμένος εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ παρ’ ἐκεῖνον). This occurrence is in Jesus’ parable in Luke 18:9-14, which is often referred to as “The Parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector.” Jesus compares two men at the end of the story and tells them who is justified and who is not. The participle δεδικαιωμένος functions comparatively<sup>124</sup> like “more upright than that one,” so its interpretation as a forensic term can be questioned. There is a debate about whether the justification concept in this parable is the same as how Paul uses it in his letters as a “justification by faith” concept or not. Piper argues that it is the same: “Jesus taught the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith alone on the basis of an imputed righteousness, not an inherent righteousness that God

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<sup>124</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 297.

works in us.”<sup>125</sup> In contrast, Bock argues, “The term is not here a technical term for final salvation, since there are no soteriological issues raised other than a generalized request for mercy in the context of prayer. The tax collector’s prayer was accepted or ‘found favor’ in contrast to the Pharisee’s prayer. Δικαίωω is forensic but not in the decisive sense.”<sup>126</sup> Garland has the same opinion emphasizing that “it should not be translated as ‘justified,’ as it were a forensic term. The issue addressed by the parable is who serves God best, ‘who is truly observant of God’s honor?’”<sup>127</sup> This section is not about making an in-depth analysis of this particular issue and taking a stand on any of the opinions. However, I can make a few general observations.

First, *Jesus does not explicitly teach the justification by faith concept in the Gospels.* Second, from Jesus’ explanation of this parable it seems that *the condition of the justification in this story is not faith but humility* because this is how Jesus explains it: “I tell you that this man went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:14). I conclude that even if the justification concept of the parable is the same as Paul’s justification concept, this conclusion cannot easily be derived from this or other texts of the Gospels.

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<sup>125</sup> John Piper, “Did Jesus Preach the Gospel of Evangelicalism?,” *Desiring God*, April 14, 2010, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/did-jesus-preach-the-gospel-of-evangelicalism>.

<sup>126</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 771.

<sup>127</sup> David E. Garland, *Luke*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2011), 720.

## James and Paul on justification by faith

In this section I focus on the understanding of *justification* by James and Paul for two reasons: (1) these concepts are the most important concepts of the Pauline gospel, and it is an important question of whether the Pillar Apostles wrote about it, (2) there is a seeming contradiction on the issues of faith and work in the letters of Paul and James, so the question arises: does James teach a different gospel? Since among the Pillar Apostles, James elaborates on these issues in the most detail, and his teaching seems to be most challenging, I focus on James 2:14, 21–22, 24, 26 and compare it with Paul’s letters (e.g., Romans 3:28).

A detailed exegesis is not the goal of this section so I briefly summarize the most important observations:

1. “faith” for Paul means *full personal commitment*, i.e., “trust,” but for James, it is an *intellectual recognition* (demons can do it), i.e., a mere “assent,”
2. “justification” for Paul is a “*righteous state*,” in God’s sight, apart from any works or merit, but James uses it in a “*proved right*” (vindicated) sense,
3. the context is different; for Paul, it was a situation where it was important to stress that saving faith works apart from works, but James addressed the problem when faith was only a passive assent without any love-driven, life-altering commitment.
4. Both Paul and James refer to an episode of Abraham’s life to prove and explain their views but they refer to different episodes! Paul refers to Genesis 15:6, where *Abraham was justified by faith*, but James refers to the

story of the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22, where *Abraham's faith was tested*.

5. Paul focuses on the *basis of the justification* (faith), James focuses on the *nature and completion of the justification* (work).

In summary, we can conclude that Paul and James do not present two different gospels but rather reflect *two different aspects of the gospel*. I think even these often-mentioned seemingly contradicting views of Paul and James on faith and works could surprisingly support a relationship between the two views and, therefore, between James and the letters of Paul. Moo excellently summarizes it: “Works, claims Paul, have no role in getting us into a relationship with God. Works, insists James, do have a role in securing God’s vindication in the judgment. Paul strikes at legalism; James at quietism. Each message needs to be heard.”<sup>128</sup> The two different views complement each other, supporting their unity rather than presenting two different views.

## **The person of Jesus Christ**

My definition of the gospel concept shows that all its components are important and all can lead us in one direction: to the person of Jesus Christ. It may seem to be strange, but my next gospel concept candidate is the *person of Jesus!*

Let’s focus on *what was exactly preached by the apostles!* More precisely, what was the *essence of the preaching of the apostles?* If we clearly understand what was preached, it may help us to understand what the gospel is.

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<sup>128</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 44.

Mark starts his Gospel as “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). If it is a plenary genitive<sup>129</sup> in Greek, this means that the gospel proclaimed by Jesus is, in fact, the gospel about himself, pointing to his person.<sup>130</sup> Luke wrote that Philip proclaimed the person of Christ: “Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ” (Acts 8:5). Luke also says it later: “But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus” (Acts 11:20) or “proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts 28:31). Paul gave a detailed definition about the gospel as a *message about Jesus’ life* in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, i.e., Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, but when he summarized his gospel preaching he simply said, that “preaching Christ,” which means to *preach his person*, i.e., “Him we proclaim” (Colossians 1:28). Calvin summarizes as follows: “Christ clothed in the gospel.”<sup>131</sup>

Sinclair Ferguson emphasizes that the real essence of preaching Christ is to *preach the person of Jesus Christ himself*:

. . . we should also notice that knowing how to “preach Christ from the Old Testament,” or understanding biblical theology, or seeing the flow of redemptive

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<sup>129</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 119.

<sup>130</sup> The NET Bible notes: “The genitive in the phrase τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (*tou euangeliou Iēsou Christou*, “the gospel of Jesus Christ”) could be translated as either a subjective genitive (“the gospel which Jesus brings [or proclaims]”) or an objective genitive (“the gospel about Jesus Christ”). Either is grammatically possible. This is possibly an instance of a plenary genitive (see *ExSyn* 119–21; M. Zerwick, “*Biblical Greek*”, §§36–39). If so, an interplay between the two concepts is intended: The gospel which Jesus proclaims is in fact the gospel about himself.”

<sup>131</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford L. Battles (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), III.2.vi.

history, or knowing how to get to Christ from any part of the Scriptures does not necessarily result in actually preaching the person of Jesus Christ himself. Seeing Christ as the solution to a series of clues embedded in the Old Testament is not actually the same as proclaiming Jesus himself, in our flesh, bearing our sins, dying our death, and rising for our justification. A formula for preaching Christ is not identical to the persona of Christ, and we must never confuse hermeneutical principles with Christ himself. The former did not die for us on the cross; the latter did.<sup>132</sup>

Spurgeon simply put it that the *gospel is a person*, Jesus Christ, i.e.,

“Our faith is a person; the gospel that we have to preach is a person; and go wherever we may, we have something solid and tangible to preach, for our gospel is a person. If you had asked the twelve Apostles in their day, ‘What do you believe in?’ they would not have stopped to go round about with a long sermon, but they would have pointed to their Master and they would have said, ‘We believe him.’ ‘But what are your doctrines?’ ‘There they stand incarnate.’ ‘But what is your practice?’ ‘There stands our practice. He is our example.’ ‘What then do you believe?’ Hear the glorious answer of the Apostle Paul, ‘We preach Christ crucified.’ Our creed, our body of divinity, our whole theology is summed up in the person of Christ Jesus.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance—Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2016), 49n23.

<sup>133</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures Delivered Before the Young Men’s Christian Association, in Exeter Hall: From November, 1858, to February, 1859* (London: Forgotten Books, 2018), 159–60.

John McArthur concurs: “It all comes down to one thing: our message is a person. We proclaim a person, not a dogma, a rule, or even a religion. Our message is a conversation that has an individual at its core. We are talking about Jesus. We are praising Jesus. We are exalting Jesus.”<sup>134</sup>

Scot McKnight writes similarly: “Did Jesus preach the gospel? Yes, he preached the gospel because the gospel is the saving Story of Jesus completing Israel’s Story, and Jesus clearly set himself at the center of God’s saving plan for Israel.”<sup>135</sup>

Based on the above discussion, I conclude that a fitting candidate for the definition of the gospel is the *person of Jesus*.

## **Conclusion**

In chapters 4–7 above, I have presented a preparatory study for the analysis undertaken in the subsequent chapter. These chapters assembled key conceptual building blocks centered on the gospel message, thereby establishing a framework intended to inform and support my analysis that follows.

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<sup>134</sup> John F. MacArthur and Grace Community Church Staff, *Evangelism: How to Share the Gospel Faithfully* (Thomas Nelson, 2011), 74.

<sup>135</sup> McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel*, 127.

## Chapter 8

### Analysis: Lessons to Be Learned

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and evaluate the conflicting claims of the New Perspective on Paul and the traditional Reformed position, with particular attention to the relevant discussion presented in Chester's work. I do not intend to conduct an all-encompassing study that investigates every issue, but rather focus on the main questions summarized in chapters 2–3 and their implications. I also focus on the misinterpretations and dangers of the NPP, as well as the main lessons we can learn from it. Finally, I address potential possibilities for reconciling the NPP with the traditional Reformed view.

#### What is the righteousness of God?

We have seen in chapters 2–3 that the interpretation of the righteousness of God in the NPP differs significantly from the traditional view. Chester adequately demonstrated that the traditional view, including Augustine's exegesis,<sup>136</sup> Calvin's exegesis,<sup>137</sup> Luther's exegesis,<sup>138</sup> and Melancthon's exegesis<sup>139</sup> are in general agreement (except at some minor points), concurring that the righteousness of God is accurately interpreted as an alien righteousness that we receive from God, by which sinners are made right with Him. Simply speaking, in the NPP and traditional debate the question is whether the righteousness of

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<sup>136</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 63, 69–70, 245.

<sup>137</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 99–100, 270, 279.

<sup>138</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 58n124, 97–98, 180n17, 207n104, 209n112, 244–55.

<sup>139</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 221, 244–55.

God is the covenant faithfulness of God (possessive genitive) or God's righteousness given to humans (genitive of origin).

First, I now discuss the critique of NPP on the Reformers' view regarding the righteousness of God. Wright's main critical comment is that "righteousness is not an object, a substance, or a gas which can be passed across the courtroom."<sup>140</sup> Through a careful analysis of the Reformers' statements, Chester argues that the Reformers never made such claims; therefore, Wright's position constitutes a straw man argument. Chester explains that when the Reformers "freely use the term 'imputation' they do not intend by it a *transfer* or passing of righteousness from Christ to the believer but rather a crucial aspect of what it means to be united with Christ [emphasis is original]."<sup>141</sup> Moreover, Schreiner points out that "Wright makes a fundamental mistakes from the outset. He assumes that God's role as a judge accords exactly with what happens in human courtrooms. But we can't constrain the courtroom metaphor by what typically happens in human courts."<sup>142</sup> Indeed, "when a human being stands before God this is not an ordinary courtroom."<sup>143</sup>

Second, I now investigate the interpretation of the term. There are two important studies that contribute significant results to this question. Based on a comprehensive study, Mark A. Seifrid adequately demonstrated that Paul's righteousness language goes beyond the idea of covenantal faithfulness. His conclusion is that "both in the Hebrew Scriptures

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<sup>140</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 113.

<sup>141</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 363.

<sup>142</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Justification: An Introduction* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023), 120.

<sup>143</sup> Schreiner, *Justification*, 121.

and early Judaism the usage of righteousness language includes the idea of retributive justice.”<sup>144</sup> Interestingly, Seifrid’s important warnings against reducing the Hebrew concept of “righteousness” to “covenant faithfulness”<sup>145</sup> are even accepted by James Dunn.<sup>146</sup>

Charles Lee Irons has published a comprehensive study<sup>147</sup> on the righteousness of God, which is a revised version of his PhD dissertation published in 2011. This monograph presents a well-researched study with in-depth investigations of the term in extra-biblical Greek, the Old Testament, and Jewish literature.

In extra-biblical Greek, the sources before the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC are fragmentary, but he found that “because the word δικαιοσύνη is rarely used prior to the 5th century, whereas the words δίκη and τὸ δίκαιον predominate in this earlier period, it is reasonable to assume that the origin of δικαιοσύνη lies in the realm of judicial procedure.”<sup>148</sup>

Regarding the Old Testament, Irons has found 276 occurrences of the noun “righteousness” in the Hebrew Bible/LXX and categorized them in three main groups: “legal righteousness” (44.6%) referring to judicial court, “ethical righteousness” (41.3 %) related to moral uprightness, and “correctness” (9.4%) referring to speaking the truth or

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<sup>144</sup> Mark A. Seifrid, “Righteousness Language in the Hebrew Scriptures and Early Judaism,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 1, *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 441–42.

<sup>145</sup> Mark A. Seifrid, “Paul’s Use of Righteousness Language Against Its Hellenistic Background,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 2, *The Paradoxes of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 51–52.

<sup>146</sup> James D. G. Dunn, review of *Justification and Variegated Nomism: Vol 2: The Paradoxes of Paul* by D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds., *Trinity Journal* 25, no. 1 (2004): 319.

<sup>147</sup> Charles Lee Irons, *The Righteousness of God: A Lexical Examination of the Covenant-Faithfulness Interpretation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

<sup>148</sup> Irons, *The Righteousness of God*, 104.

doing something correctly.<sup>149</sup> He has shown that “the ‘righteousness of God’ terminology in both the Hebrew Old Testament and the Septuagint is actually best understood in light of the judicial context of legal controversy.”<sup>150</sup>

His study on the Jewish Literature (including the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Apocrypha/OT Pseudepigrapha) ended with the conclusion that “we must set aside as incorrect one of the linguistic pillars on which New Perspective scholars have attempted to build their view that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Paul is a cipher for ‘God’s covenant faithfulness.’”<sup>151</sup>

Iron has carefully analyzed Romans 3:5, 25–26 and 2 Corinthians 5:21 and concludes that “we did not find any internal evidence from Paul’s own epistles to support taking δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ to mean God’s covenant faithfulness or his saving power or some combination of the two.”<sup>152</sup> Irons’ findings have crucial importance in understanding the term’s usage in the Bible, particularly in the NPP and traditional Reformed debate, providing a comprehensive demonstration of the lexical data related to the righteousness of God. The results unambiguously confirm the traditional view.

In conclusion, while the NPP appears to misrepresent the traditional interpretation by attributing to the Reformers’ positions they never advanced, recent scholarship on the doctrine of the righteousness of God largely corroborates the traditional understanding.

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<sup>149</sup> Irons, *The Righteousness of God*, 111.

<sup>150</sup> Irons, *The Righteousness of God*, 193.

<sup>151</sup> Irons, *The Righteousness of God*, 271.

<sup>152</sup> Irons, *The Righteousness of God*, 336.

## What is justification?

The doctrine of justification lies at the heart of the NPP. Chester has claimed that “while there is certainly no one single understanding of justification in NPP scholarship, there are dominant trends in which justification is interpreted either in terms of the inclusion of the Gentiles in God’s people or in terms of participation in Christ or some combination of the two.”<sup>153</sup> I summarized in chapter 2 that for Wright, justification is God’s covenantal declaration that an individual belongs to his people. If this claim is correct and justification is not God’s gracious act of declaring sinners righteous, then the Reformers’ interpretation would indeed be fundamentally mistaken. The primary evidence for the justification interpreted by the NPP and by Wright is their observation that legalistic works-righteousness did not uniformly exist in first-century Judaism.

First, regarding first-century Judaism, related work on this question has resulted in the first volume of an excellent two-volume publication that reflects relatively recent scholarship.<sup>154</sup> A very wide range of literature is studied<sup>155</sup> and a detailed documentation of the primary sources provided as a useful resource for further study. In spite of the fact that the studies in some cases partly justified some observations of the NPP, D. A. Carson summarizes that “there is strong agreement that covenantal nomism is at best a

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<sup>153</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 324.

<sup>154</sup> D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 1: *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001).

<sup>155</sup> Chapter titles and authors: Psalms and Prayers (D. Falk); Scripture-Based Stories in the Pseudepigrapha (C. A. Evans); Expansions of Scripture (P. Enns); Didactic Stories (P. R. Davies); Apocalypses (R. Bauckham); Testaments (R. A. Kugler); Wisdom (D. E. Gowan); Josephus (P. Spilsbury); Torah and Salvation in Tannaitic Literature (P. S. Alexander); Some Targum Themes (M. McNamara); Philo of Alexandria (D. M. Hay); 1QS and Salvation at Qumran (M. Bockmuehl); Righteous Language in the Hebrew Scriptures and Early Judaism (M. A. Seifrid).

reductionistic category.”<sup>156</sup> In addition, he also concludes that “covenantal nomism is not only reductionistic, it is misleading”<sup>157</sup> because it applies a formula to a diverse literature which has no such uniformity. Moreover, the NPP conceives of covenantal nomism as an alternative to merit theology, but this is a misleading alternative as aptly summarized by D. A Carson:

Over against merit theology stands grace (whether the word itself is used or not). By putting over against merit theology not grace but covenant theology, Sanders has managed to have a structure that preserves grace in the “getting in” while preserving works (and frequently some form or other of merit theology) in the “staying in.” In other words, it is as if Sanders is saying, “See, we don’t have merit theology here; we have covenantal nomism”—but the covenantal nomism he constructs is so flexible that it includes and baptizes a great deal of merit theology.”<sup>158</sup>

Robert J. Cara’s more recent study has further confirmed similar findings about first-century Judaism. He studied Jewish literature including examples from Apocrypha,<sup>159</sup> three examples from the OT Pseudepigrapha,<sup>160</sup> three examples from the Dead Sea

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<sup>156</sup> D. A. Carson, “Summaries and Conclusions,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, vol. 1, *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 543.

<sup>157</sup> D. A. Carson, “Summaries and Conclusions,” 544.

<sup>158</sup> D. A. Carson, “Summaries and Conclusions,” 544-45.

<sup>159</sup> 4 Ezra and Sirach

<sup>160</sup> 2 Baruch, Testament of Abraham, and Psalms of Solomon

Scrolls,<sup>161</sup> and five examples from Rabbinic literature tractates.<sup>162</sup> His conclusion is that “all of these documents have a work righteousness soteriology.”<sup>163</sup> Cara concludes that “*there are many examples of work righteousness (Pelagian and semi-Pelagian versions) in Second Temple Judaism literature and Sanders’ uniform covenantal nomism is mistaken [emphasis is original].*”<sup>164</sup>

Second, I consider some important biblical texts that have been neglected by NPP scholars, including Wright, mostly because they are from the group of Deutero-Pauline letters. These texts are Ephesians 2:8–10, Titus 1:4–7, and 2 Timothy 1:8–10. The careful exegesis of these three texts shows that all of them clearly “contrast a work righteousness soteriology with a grace one.”<sup>165</sup> Even if these letters are not regarded as Pauline, they nevertheless provide valuable evidence that a theology of works-righteousness was present within Second Temple Judaism.

Third, I consider the doctrine of imputation in 2 Corinthians 5:21. Scholars associated with the NPP, including N. T. Wright, reject the doctrine of imputation as it is interpreted by the Reformers. Wright’s reading of 2 Corinthians 5:21 diverges significantly from the Reformation understanding of the text.<sup>166</sup> He argues that the plural “we” in this verse referring to the apostle and his ministry. This argument can be debated since Paul

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<sup>161</sup> Rule of Community, Peshar Habakuk, and Miqsat Maase Ha-Torah

<sup>162</sup> m. Abot, m. Sotah, t. Qiddushin, t. Sanhedrin, and b. Rosh Hashanah

<sup>163</sup> Robert J. Cara, *Cracking the Foundation of the New Perspective on Paul: Covenantal Nomism versus Reformed Covenantal Theology* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2017), 125.

<sup>164</sup> Cara, *Cracking the Foundation of the New Perspective on Paul*, 198–99.

<sup>165</sup> Cara, *Cracking the Foundation of the New Perspective on Paul*, 169.

<sup>166</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 121–22.

was writing a letter including himself among other believers; he uses language similarly a few verses before in writing “reconciled us to himself” (2 Corinthians 5:18) including all believers.<sup>167</sup> Wright’s other argument against imputation is that Paul was using γενώμεθα (we might become), which, according to Wright, indicates a process. As a response to it, Greek grammarians showed that the verb is often equivalent to εἰμί (to be), which does not indicate process.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, “even if the verb means ‘become,’ it does not rule out imputation, for believers become something they weren’t before (‘righteous’!) by virtue of union with Christ.”<sup>169</sup> On the other hand, Guthrie profoundly confirmed that the traditional meaning is sound, and he showed that the text has a strong parallelism with Isaiah 53.<sup>170</sup> Imputation is also supported by other important verses like Romans 5:12–19 and 1 Corinthians 1:30.<sup>171</sup>

Fourth, Wright’s understanding of justification introduces a soteriological dimension that raises significant theological concerns. Justification, on this view, is not completed at the moment of conversion but possesses an eschatological orientation, such that its final determination is deferred to the last judgment and evaluated on the basis of the believer’s entire life as Wright’ claims: “Present justification declares, on the basis of faith, what future justification will affirm publicly (according to 2:14–16 and 8:9–11) on

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<sup>167</sup> Schreiner, *Justification*, 122.

<sup>168</sup> Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 455.

<sup>169</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Faith Alone: The Doctrine of Justification: What the Reformers Taught...and Why It Still Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2017), 187.

<sup>170</sup> George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 313–15.

<sup>171</sup> Schreiner, *Faith Alone: The Doctrine of Justification*, 182–89.

the basis of the entire life.”<sup>172</sup> In this framework, a person’s covenant faithfulness, which is understood as obedience, functions as the basis of final justification, thereby grounding the ultimate declaration of righteousness in the believer’s own works rather than locating justification entirely in the finished work of Christ on the believer’s behalf. In addition, the consequence of Wright’s view is that the one-moment justification upheld by the Reformers is transformed into a two-phase process. John Piper challenges this framework, asking the most important clarifying question in his book, as he answers Wright: “*What will be the final ground of our acceptance in the presence of God?* [emphasis original].”<sup>173</sup> The study by Richard Gaffin, which examines those texts in which future judgment occurs, adequately shows that “For Christians, future judgment according to works does not operate according to a different principle than their already having been justified by faith.”<sup>174</sup> Final judgment should be understood as the public vindication and full revelation of an already-accomplished present justification.

In summary, recent scholarship has not only demonstrated the presence of works-righteousness within Second Temple Judaism but has also shown that careful exegetical analysis of Scripture substantiates the claims advanced by the Reformers.

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<sup>172</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 153.

<sup>173</sup> John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2007), 101.

<sup>174</sup> Richard B. Gaffin, *By Faith, Not by Sight: Paul and the Order of Salvation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 112.

## What are the works of the law?

As Chester correctly says, the “works of the law” is the “heart of the matter.”<sup>175</sup> If it is a boundary-marking issue compared to the effort to achieving righteousness and acceptance before God, then the Reformers and their followers fundamentally failed to understand the doctrines of justification and, more broadly, the gospel itself.

First, I discuss the so called “introspective conscience” critique of NPP scholars and Wright. Chester challenges this scholarly assumption that the Reformers misinterpreted Paul by projecting their own “introspective conscience” and psychological struggles with guilt onto his letters.<sup>176</sup> He makes it clear that rather than viewing the pre-conversion Paul as a man plagued by a guilty conscience, the Reformers typically portrayed him as having false confidence in his law-observance until the law’s objective revelatory function exposed his unrecognized sin. Ultimately, Chester argues that the modern critique of an “introspective conscience” is a misleading dead end, as the Reformers’ core arguments about the “works of the law” do not depend on the psychological experience of guilt.

Second, I consider the ambiguous definition of NPP scholars about the “works of the law.” NPP writers are not in agreement on how to interpret the “works of the law,” but, generally, they mean boundary-marking. However, they do not always hold only this definition. For example, even James Dunn claims that “I do not want to narrow the ‘works

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<sup>175</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 346–59.

<sup>176</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 341–46.

of the law' to boundary issues.”<sup>177</sup> Nevertheless, this is the main claim of NPP scholars, and Wright also maintains that view.<sup>178</sup>

Third, I focus on the exegesis of the Pauline letters. The distinctiveness of this phrase lies in the fact that we cannot find it in the LXX, nor do other NT authors use it. The careful exegesis of both Douglas Moo<sup>179</sup> and Stephen Westerholm<sup>180</sup> convincingly proves that the “works of the law” refers to the deeds demanded by the Mosaic law. Moreover, Thomas Schreiner’s exegesis<sup>181</sup> on Romans and Galatians clearly shows that the “works” in the “works of the law” referring to the whole law<sup>182</sup> and numerous Pauline passage confirm this understanding (e.g., Romans 2:6–10; 11:6; 2 Corinthians 11:15; Galatians 5:19).

Fourth, Moo also points out the some failure of the NPP definition: “‘Works’ had no more place in the selection of Abraham and Jacob, who bore no relationship to the law (in the sense the term is used in this phrase), than in the justification of Galatian Gentiles, who were being encouraged to supplement their faith with “works of the law.”<sup>183</sup> These two examples clearly do not support the definition of Wright. Moo makes it clear: “In other

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<sup>177</sup> James D. G. Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul: Whence, What and Whither?,” in *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 28.

<sup>178</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 156–57.

<sup>179</sup> Douglas J. Moo, “‘Law,’ ‘Works of the Law,’ and Legalism in Paul,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983): 90–99.

<sup>180</sup> Stephen Westerholm, *Israel’s Law and the Church’s Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans-Lightning Source, 1988), 106–21.

<sup>181</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 44–71.

<sup>182</sup> Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment*, 52–53.

<sup>183</sup> Moo, “‘Law,’ ‘Works of the Law,’ and Legalism in Paul,” 97.

words, Paul appears to criticize ‘works of the law not because they are *nomou* (‘of the law) but because they are *erga* (‘works’).”<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, Moo provides a second point that reveals the failure of NPP view: “Paul’s argument in Gal 3:10–12, as well as the clear allusion to Ps 143:2 in Gal 2:16 and Rom 3:20, indicates that ‘works of the law’ have always been an *improper* way to seek God’s righteousness [emphasis original].”<sup>185</sup>

Fifth, Horton demonstrates, through a detailed analysis supported by multiple examples, that the interpretation of works of the law as concrete deeds is attested within the literature of Second Temple Judaism.<sup>186</sup> Moreover, in the New Testament, when someone asked about the way of salvation, he was always referring to deeds to be done. For example, when the wealthy teacher asks Jesus: “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 18:18) or when the Philippian jailer asks Paul and Silas: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30).

In conclusion, I identified significant shortcomings both in the “introspective conscience” critique stressed by NPP scholars and in the NPP’s definition of “works of the law.” Moreover, the lack of conceptual clarity and the divergent definitions offered by various NPP scholars further undermine the coherence of the position. By contrast, careful exegetical analysis of the Second Temple literature, the Septuagint and the New Testament lends substantial support to the Reformers’ interpretation.

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<sup>184</sup> Moo, “‘Law,’ ‘Works of the Law,’ and Legalism in Paul,” 97.

<sup>185</sup> Moo, “‘Law,’ ‘Works of the Law,’ and Legalism in Paul,” 97.

<sup>186</sup> Michael Horton, *Justification*, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2018), 2:98–104.

## What is the gospel?

The gospel constitutes the central and foundational message of Christianity. It was proclaimed by Jesus and the apostles and has remained the core message of the church throughout the past two millennia. Consequently, a misrepresentation or erroneous understanding of the gospel represents a profound failure for the church. In this light, the NPP approach, exemplified in Wright's critique of the Reformers' understanding of the gospel, warrants careful examination in order to ascertain which interpretation is theologically and historically sound.

First, I examine some deficiencies in Wright's treatment of the definition of the gospel. Wright claims that "I am perfectly comfortable with what people normally mean when they say 'the gospel'. I just don't think it is what Paul means."<sup>187</sup> This shocking statement appears internally inconsistent and raises serious concerns regarding its theological coherence. Is he really being honest when he says he is "perfectly comfortable" with that? Is he really fine with people believing something different than what Paul teaches on the gospel? This is not a minor issue where several interpretations are possible and there are no serious consequences of misinterpretations. This is the most important question of the Bible and Christianity! Paul considers this question and the danger of a different gospel seriously in Galatians 1:6-9. Consequently, such statements call into question the coherence and credibility of the proposed new definition of the gospel advanced by Wright.

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<sup>187</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 40.

Second, I examine the *reasons underlying the difficulty of defining the gospel*. As an illustration, I demonstrate the divergences in the ways prominent scholars—D. A. Carson, F. F. Bruce, J. I. Packer, Timothy Keller, and N. T. Wright—conceptualize and define the gospel. D. A. Carson defines the gospel as follows<sup>188</sup>:

The gospel is integrally tied to the Bible’s storyline. Indeed, it is incomprehensible without understanding that storyline. God is the sovereign, transcendent and personal God who has made the universe, including us, his image-bearers. Our misery lies in our rebellion, our alienation from God, which, despite his forbearance, attracts his implacable wrath. But God, precisely because love is of the very essence of his character, takes the initiative and prepared for the coming of his own Son by raising up a people who, by covenantal stipulations, temple worship, systems of sacrifice and of priesthood, by kings and by prophets, are taught something of what God is planning and what he expects. In the fullness of time his Son comes and takes on human nature. He comes not, in the first instance, to judge but to save: he dies the death of his people, rises from the grave and, in returning to his heavenly Father, bequeaths the Holy Spirit as the down payment and guarantee of the ultimate gift he has secured for them—an eternity of bliss in the presence of God himself, in a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. The only alternative is to be shut out from the presence of this God forever, in the torments of hell. What men and women must do, before it is too late, is repent and trust Christ; the alternative is to disobey the gospel.

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<sup>188</sup> D. A. Carson, “The Biblical Gospel,” in *For Such a Time as This: Perspectives on Evangelicalism, Past, Present and Future*, ed. Harold H. Rowdon and Steve Brady (London: Evangelical Alliance, 1996), 75–85.

In his lengthy definition, Carson points out that the gospel is strongly related to the *storyline of the Bible*, and God's salvation plan is derived from this story.

F. F. Bruce highlights *six main elements of the gospel* based on 1 Corinthians 15 as follows<sup>189</sup>:

Only one saving message is attested by the NT. The “gospel to the circumcision” preached by Peter and his colleagues did not differ in content from the “gospel to the uncircumcised” entrusted to Paul (Gal. 2:7), though the form of presentation might vary according to the audience. Paul's testimony is, “Whether therefore it was I or they [Peter and his colleagues], so we preach, and so you believed” (1 Cor. 15:11).

The basic elements in the message were these:

1. the prophecies have been fulfilled and the new age inaugurated by the coming of Christ;
2. he was born into the family of David;
3. he died according to the Scriptures, to deliver his people from this evil age;
4. he was buried, and raised again the third day, according to the Scriptures;
5. he is exalted at God's right hand as Son of God, Lord of living and dead;
6. he will come again, to judge the world and consummate his saving work.

J. I. Packer also defines the gospel, identifying *five main themes* as follows<sup>190</sup>:

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<sup>189</sup> Trevin Wax, “Gospel Definitions,” 2011, <https://trevinwax.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/Gospel-Definitions1.pdf>.

<sup>190</sup> J. I. Packer, *Serving the People of God: Collected Shorter Writings of J. I. Packer* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1998), 44.

I formulate the Gospel this way: it is information issuing in invitation; it is proclamation issuing in persuasion. It is an admonitory message embracing five themes. First, God: the God whom Paul proclaimed to the Athenians in Acts 17, the God of Christian theism. Second, humankind: made in God's image but now totally unable to respond to God or do anything right by reason of sin in their moral and spiritual system. Third, the person and work of Christ: God incarnate, who by dying wrought atonement and who now lives to impart the blessing that flows from his work of atonement. Fourth, repentance, that is, turning from sin to God, from self-will to Jesus Christ. And fifthly, new community: a new family, a new pattern of human togetherness which results from the unity of the Lord's people in the Lord, henceforth to function under the one Father as a family and a fellowship.

Tim Keller gave several definitions for the gospel; I mention one that focuses on the *salvation aspect* of the gospel: "The gospel is the good news that God has accomplished our salvation for us through Christ in order to bring us into a right relationship with him and eventually to destroy all the results of sin in the world."<sup>191</sup>

N. T. Wright formulates his definition in terms of a *royal announcement*, and his most compact definition is: "The gospel is the announcement that Jesus is Lord."<sup>192</sup>

We can observe that these scholars define the gospel differently *depending on the main focus they emphasize*. Furthermore, although the definitions exhibit some overlapping

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<sup>191</sup> Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 29.

<sup>192</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 183.

elements, not all components are shared, and certain elements reflect significant theological divergence as illustrated in Figure 3.

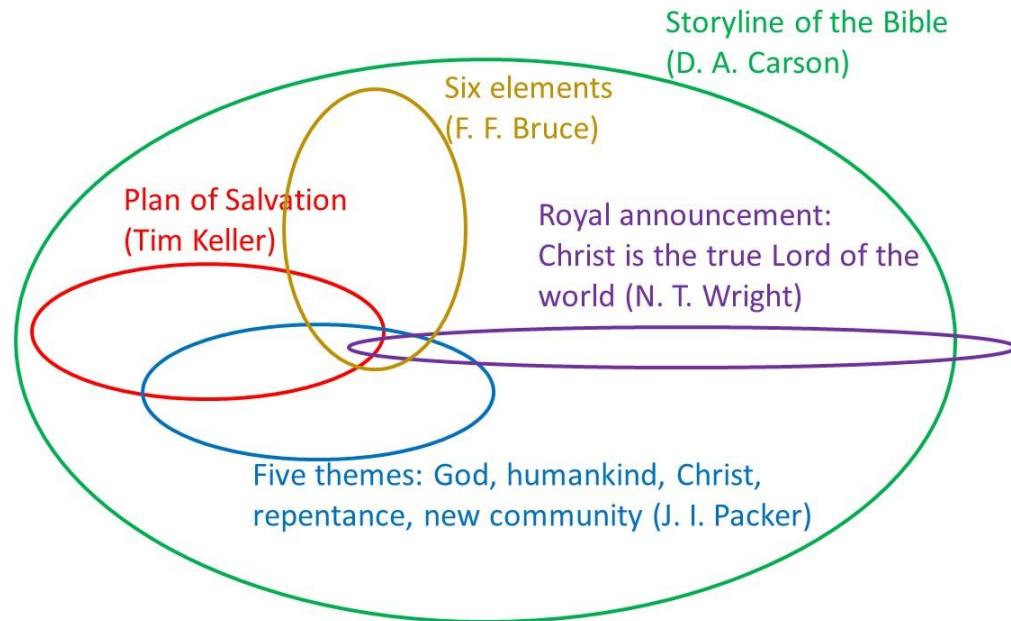


Figure 3 The definitions of the gospel

Tim Keller also confirms the complexity of the gospel and the difficulty of formulating a compact definition: “The gospel is not everything, yet in the final analysis it cannot be tamed into a single simple formula with a number of points that must be recited to everyone, in every time and place.”<sup>193</sup>

To further elaborate on this question, I recall the results of my preparatory studies in chapters 4–6. In chapter 4, my study revealed Jesus’ intention in his earthly ministry. We have seen that Jesus’ intention was to demonstrate God’s love, seek and save the lost, and proclaim the kingdom of God. In addition, his main accomplishment was to save humanity through his death and resurrection. Jesus’ goal was to bring eternal life to those

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<sup>193</sup> Keller, *Center Church*, 37.

who believe in him. All of these considerations provide guidance in the pursuit of a precise definition of the gospel; however, *they remain too general to allow for a definitive formulation.*

In chapter 5, my study focused on the *gospel words* in the Bible. We have concluded that εὐαγγέλιον was an announcement (mostly related to political or military victory) of good news in the ancient world, and this meaning persisted in Greco-Roman literature and in the Old Testament. More specifically, this good news was applied to the announcement of the reign of Yahweh through his servant to restore Israel in the Old Testament. We have seen that the New Testament authors reconfigured its original meaning in relation to its mode of accomplishment (Christ's sacrifice), its intended recipients (all people), and its overall scope (the whole world). My examination of the gospel words in the canonical Gospels and in the letters of the Pillars indicates that its usage of the gospel words is closely associated with (1) the concepts of "preaching" or "proclamation," (2) the notion of the "kingdom of God," and (3) themes of healing and concern for the poor. These insights further inform and shape our understanding of the gospel; however, *they still encompass a broad range of meanings and are therefore insufficient for establishing a precise definition.*

In addition, based on my study in chapter 7 I have concluded that the kingdom of God as the theme is closely associated with the gospel in the Synoptics. Moreover, my study also revealed that the person of Jesus, as a historical and theological figure, can be also identified as a central component of the gospel.

The results of my preparatory studies demonstrate that the central difficulty in defining the gospel is that it is closely related to a *wide range of theological themes and*

*has far-reaching implications.* As a result, it is not easy to determine which element should be regarded as the core that most adequately expresses the gospel's essential meaning.

Nonetheless, the question remains, in light of the foregoing complexities: *what constitutes the essential elements that any faithful definition of the gospel must necessarily articulate?*

Helpful here is D. A. Carson's excellent guideline to understand the most essential elements of the gospel. Carson summarized them in eight points. The gospel is<sup>194</sup>:

1. Christological (i.e., Christ-centered),
2. Theological (i.e., God-centered),
3. Biblical (i.e., "according to Scriptures"),
4. Apostolic (i.e., the witness and teaching of the apostles),
5. Historical (i.e., Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection)
6. Personal (i.e., a way of personal salvation),
7. Universal (i.e., a new humanity drawn from every tribe and nation), and
8. Eschatological (i.e., eschatological fulfillment of our transformation).

On the basis of this guideline, I examine the *apostolic kerygma* recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 as the focus of the subsequent analysis. I discussed this apostolic kerygma in chapter 6 and I chose it as a basis for my gospel concept definition in my analysis in that chapter.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 that "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the

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<sup>194</sup> D. A. Carson, "What Is the Gospel?," Gospel Coalition Conference, May 28, 2007, [https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/conference\\_media/what-is-the-gospel/](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/conference_media/what-is-the-gospel/).

Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” The reason why I consider this text regarding the gospel with priority over all others can be seen from the whole 1 Corinthians 15:1–11 passage:

- (1) Paul explicitly says that *it is the gospel* in v. 1,
- (2) Paul explicitly says that *this is what he received* in v. 3,
- (3) Paul explicitly says two times that *it is the gospel he preached* in v. 1 and v. 11,
- (4) Paul emphasizes that this message is “*of first importance*” in v. 3 and
- (5) Paul claims that this is *the means of the church’s existence*,<sup>195</sup> as he informs the Corinthians that it is this gospel “in which you stand” in v. 1 and
- (6) Paul twice emphasizes that what he claims is “in accordance with the Scriptures” in v. 3 and v. 4.
- (7) My study in chapter 6 confirmed that the *gospel concept*, defined on the basis of 1 Corinthians 15:3–4, is *found in all the letters of the Pillars, indicating theological coherence with the Pauline corpus*.

Collectively, these findings provide sufficient justification for selecting this verse as a summary of the gospel, which I will further study in the following analysis.

Consider 1 Corinthians 15:3b–5a as structured<sup>196</sup> in Table 12. This clearly shows that this gospel summary presents *two historical events*: Christ died and was resurrected.

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<sup>195</sup> Paul Barnett, *1 Corinthians: Holiness and Hope of a Rescued People* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2011), 268.

<sup>196</sup> Tim Patrick, *The Amazing Depth of the Simplest Truth: The Gospel and Gospel Theology* (InterVarsity Press, IL, 2025), 36.

Table 12 The gospel summary of 1 Corinthians 15:3b–5a

Christ died for our sins	The gospel message 1
in accordance with the Scriptures,	Fulfilling the Old Testament
that he was buried,	There was evidence
that he was raised on the third day	The gospel message 2
in accordance with the Scriptures,	Fulfilling the Old Testament
and that he appeared	There was evidence

We can make some important observations:<sup>197</sup>

- (1) the gospel message composed of two historical events, the *death of Christ* (the gospel message 1) and the *resurrection of Christ* (gospel message 2),
- (2) *both the death and resurrection* are important parts of the gospel message,
- (3) both events were *in accordance with the Scriptures*,
- (4) both events present *acts of Christ*,
- (5) the burial of Christ and his appearance are *evidences of the two events* and do not have the same significance as the death and resurrection of Christ,
- (6) *it is possible to summarize the gospel* in a simple way as Paul shows this example.

Considering not only verses 3–4 but also those verses, which introduce this gospel summary from verse 1, we can also find further important observations: *receiving the gospel produces that one becomes “being saved,”* see in v. 2 “by which you are being saved.” Furthermore, we can find the *purpose* of the first event (the death of Christ), in

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<sup>197</sup> Patrick, *The Amazing Depth of the Simplest Truth*, 37–38.

verse 3: “for our sins.”<sup>198</sup> The purpose of the second event (the resurrection of Christ), is not included in this gospel summary but Paul gives this in Romans 4:25b<sup>199</sup> that Christ “was raised for our justification.”

In summary, this gospel summary reveals us that *the gospel is the proclamation of two historical events with their purposes: the death of Christ for our sins and the resurrection of Christ for our justification*. In addition, from Paul’s commentary on this gospel summary in verse 2 also reveals that *the reception of this gospel results in salvation*. This summary of the gospel also has the advantage of integrating the central narrative elements—the death and resurrection of Christ—with their primary theological and practical implications, namely, that these events were accomplished for our sins and for our justification, resulting in salvation. Including Paul’s comment about the result of receiving the gospel into our gospel summary, I formulate the following brief *core gospel definition* in Table 13.

Table 13 The core gospel definition

<p><b>The gospel is the good news that Christ died for our sins and rose again to make us right with God, and by receiving this message by faith, we are saved.</b></p>
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The foregoing definition of the gospel can be understood as capturing the *necessary and sufficient core of the gospel*: while further narrative or theological details may legitimately be added, the omission of any element of this formulation compromises the

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<sup>198</sup> This claim is also confirmed by Romans 3:25; 4:25; Galatians 1:4; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

<sup>199</sup> Romans 4:25 is a “mirror” verse of 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 including purposes for both events: “who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

integrity and completeness of the gospel itself. The sufficiency of this concise definition is confirmed by the fact that it addresses all eight elements identified in Carson's list above.

*I consider this core gospel definition and Carson's eight points listed above as a reference for evaluating any gospel presentation.* In our discussion, I use this reference for evaluating the NPP gospel advocated by Wright.

First, the shortest definition of Wright about the gospel: "The gospel is the announcement that Jesus is Lord."<sup>200</sup> This obviously fails to pass this test neglecting all important core elements of the gospel.

Second, even the longest definition of the gospel advocated by Wright (see chapter 2) is seriously inadequate to present the core of the gospel: (1) it lacks the purpose of the death of Christ, that it was for our sins; (2) it lacks the purpose of the resurrection of Christ, that it was for our justification; (3) it lacks the main result of receiving the gospel, that it saves us. Moreover, it is questionable how Wright's gospel definition could address the eight points in the Carson's list. One important point is definitely not being addressed: Wright's gospel does not address the way of personal salvation.

Third, Wright's denial makes claims about the gospel are also found to be wrong. Wright says that "the doctrine of justification by faith is not what Paul means by 'the gospel.'"<sup>201</sup> In contrast, we have seen that in Romans 4:25b that Christ "was raised for our justification." Wright says that "'the gospel' is not an account of how people get saved."<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 183.

<sup>201</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 158.

<sup>202</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 158.

In contrast, we have seen that the gospel is exactly an account of how people get saved according to Paul (1 Corinthians 15:2; Romans 1:16).

In conclusion, based on my preparatory study in chapter 4–7 and my analysis above I have articulated a core definition of the gospel, grounded in Scripture, that encompasses all essential elements of the gospel. Based on this framework, my analysis demonstrates that N. T. Wright’s definition of the gospel is lacking both in substantive content and in terms of credibility. Conversely, the present study affirms the validity of the Reformers’ understanding of the gospel.

### **Misinterpretations of the NPP**

My discussions above contrasted Wright’s NPP view with key Reformers’ view. The results of my analysis show that there are a number of misunderstandings and misinterpretations in Wright’s view. Based on the findings discussed above, the main misinterpretations of Wright’s NPP view are summarized in Table 14.

Table 14 The erroneous claims of Wright’s NPP view

<b>Topic of misinterpretation</b>	<b>Wright’s NPP claim</b>	<b>Fact</b>
Mischaracterization of Second Temple Judaism	Second-Temple Judaism was entirely grace-based, not a works-righteousness religion.	There are many examples of work righteousness in Second Temple Judaism literature.
The Misreading of Reformation Exegesis Regarding Conscience	Reformers have projected their debates back onto Paul (introspective conscience).	Reformers’ stress on conscience and personal guilt flows from the text itself.
Reduction of works of the law to ethnic boundary markers	The works of the law is not primarily about moral effort for merit righteousness but	Paul’s polemic includes both boundary markers and moral/ritual observances, especially since he critiques law-

	about Jewish boundary markers.	keeping as a means of self-righteousness.
Conflation of the righteousness of God with covenant faithfulness	The righteousness of God is equal to the covenant faithfulness of God.	The righteousness of God is the righteous status that God imputes to sinners by grace through faith in Christ.
Reintroduction of works into final justification	The final justification is based on the believer's entire life.	Justification is by the grace of God, received at the moment of conversion through faith alone, apart from any present or future work.
Blurring the distinction between justification and sanctification	There is a present justification by faith and a future justification by works.	There is a distinction between being declared righteous and living righteously.
Rejecting the doctrine of imputed righteousness	There is no such thing as imputed righteousness.	Christ's righteousness is imputed to believers for their legal standing before God.
Misunderstanding justification	The justification is God's covenant declaration that someone is a member of His people.	Justification is when God declares sinners righteous on the basis of Christ's righteousness.
Misunderstanding of the gospel	The gospel is only an announcement that Jesus is Lord.	The gospel is the good news that Christ died for our sins and rose again to make us right with God, and by receiving this message by faith, we are saved.

### **Dangers of the NPP**

Misunderstandings of Wright's NPP affect several areas, including soteriology, ecclesiology, eschatology, and Christology. It also affects biblical exegesis, Pauline theology, and the interpretation of Second Temple Judaism. Moreover, its impact extends to pastoral theology, assurance of salvation, and the practical application of faith in the believer's life. The danger is that Wright's NPP causes confusions in these areas.

Wright's NPP *rejects penal substitution*. This is because it fundamentally reframes the problem Paul answered. Paul's question is, "How can a holy God justly forgive guilty sinners?" This question is shifted to another question, "How does God remain faithful to

his covenant while incorporating Gentiles?” Wright’s NPP redefinition of righteousness, justification, and the function of the cross effectively removes the juridical framework on which penal substitution depends. Notably, Wright appears to affirm penal substitution in his earlier writings,<sup>203</sup> whereas in his later works, he more explicitly rejects it.<sup>204</sup>

Wright’s NPP *embraces merit righteousness on the basis of work for final justification*. His view by rejecting imputed righteousness and grounding final justification in Spirit-enabled obedience assessed at the final judgment, effectively reintroduces merit-based righteousness, despite his explicit denial of works as the basis of salvation. It is the direct consequence of his view, since if final justification awaits evaluation of works, justification is no longer fully settled in the present.

In Wright’s NPP, *the personal dimension of salvation is in danger of being diminished* because justification is primarily interpreted as a corporate and covenantal declaration of membership in the people of God rather than as a forensic verdict that directly addresses the individual sinner’s guilt, forgiveness, and standing before God. The core personal aspects of salvation—such as assurance, the relief of conscience, and the individual’s trust in Christ’s atoning work—risk being obscured or rendered secondary within the overall soteriological structure.

Most importantly, Wright’s NPP results in *the loss of the gospel*. By redefining justification as corporate covenant membership, denying imputed righteousness, and

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<sup>203</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Crown and the Fire: Meditations on the Cross and the Life of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 51.

<sup>204</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus’s Crucifixion* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2016), 147.

emphasizing obedience and future vindication, this view risks obscuring the gospel's central proclamation of Christ's atoning work and personal justification by faith alone.

From a pastoral point of view, Wright's NPP has serious consequences. Consider the situation that you are at the deathbed of a man, asking the question: "What must I do to be saved?" Should you answer this question based on Wright's NPP saying, "You must be a member of God's people," or should you rather answer the question as Paul answered it, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

### **Lessons from NPP**

Beyond the numerous misinterpretations and dangers identified in Wright's NPP, a number of valuable lessons may be derived. First, *the NPP triggered a deep research on Second-Temple Judaism* since one of the foundations of the NPP is the claim that Second-Temple Judaism was entirely grace-based, not a works-righteousness religion. This claim has stimulated a considerable body of scholarly research on Second Temple Judaism, significantly enriching our understanding of the historical, social, and religious context in which Paul wrote. This research has illuminated the diversity of Jewish thought, the nuances of covenantal nomism, the role of the law in Jewish identity, and the various ways in which first-century Jews understood works, obedience, and inclusion in God's covenant community. As a result, even critics of the NPP acknowledge that it has opened new avenues for historical and textual analysis, providing a more detailed and contextually grounded framework for interpreting Paul's letters.

Second, NPP on Paul has encouraged scholars to engage *more rigorously with the historical and social context of Pauline theology*. By highlighting the importance of Second

Temple Judaism, covenantal nomism, and first-century Jewish practices, the NPP has prompted more careful attention to how Paul's letters would have been understood by his original audience. This has fostered a renewed emphasis on *contextually informed exegesis*, ensuring that theological conclusions are rooted in the historical realities of Paul's world rather than later doctrinal assumptions.

Third, the NPP on Paul has drawn renewed *attention to the social and ecclesiological dimensions of Paul's theology*. By emphasizing issues such as covenant membership, inclusion of Gentiles, and the corporate identity of God's people, the NPP has encouraged scholars to explore how Paul's message addressed the dynamics of first-century communities. This perspective has illuminated the ways in which theological concepts like justification, law, and righteousness functioned within the life and identity of the early church, highlighting the communal and relational aspects of Paul's thought alongside its doctrinal content.

Fourth, even though the NPP's understanding of Paul's claims about justification have been found to be mistaken, it has nonetheless stimulated *sustained and rigorous scholarly dialogue concerning the doctrine of justification*. By challenging traditional Reformation interpretations, it has prompted theologians and biblical scholars to re-examine the meaning of justification in Paul's letters, the role of faith and works, and the relationship between covenant membership and individual righteousness. This ongoing debate has fostered a more nuanced and multi-dimensional discussion, bringing historical, exegetical, and theological perspectives into conversation and enriching the field of Pauline studies.

## Chapter 9

### Reconciliation of the NPP and the Traditional Reformed View

Although Wright’s outlook on Paul and the traditional Reformed view significantly diverge on key theological issues—particularly imputation, penal substitution, and the personal dimension of salvation—the prospect of reconciliation between the two remains a complex and contested question. Chester remains optimistic<sup>205</sup> about the potential for reconciliation, and I propose that it might be achieved in specific theological areas.

A promising approach was initiated by the John Barclay’s *Paul and the Gift*<sup>206</sup> and its recently published condensed and supplemented version *Paul and the Power of Grace*.<sup>207</sup> This groundbreaking work provides a “tool to more accurately characterize Second Temple views on grace.”<sup>208</sup> His taxonomy of the usages of the word “gift” putting them in six different categories is in itself extremely useful.<sup>209</sup> Barclay’s study put grace in the center of Pauline theology, which was neglected by NPP authors. For example, in Wright’s *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*,<sup>210</sup> which is a monumental Pauline study, grace cannot even be found in the subject index. Barclay claims about his book that

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<sup>205</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 362–422.

<sup>206</sup> Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*.

<sup>207</sup> John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Power of Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020).

<sup>208</sup> Douglas J. Moo, “John Barclay’s *Paul and the Gift* and the New Perspective on Paul,” *Themelios* 41, no. 2 (2016): 286.

<sup>209</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, “Paul and the Gift: A Review Article,” *Themelios* 41, no. 1 (2016): 53.

<sup>210</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013).

the reading of Paul offered in this book may be interpreted either as a re-contextualization of the Augustinian-Lutheran tradition, returning the dynamic of the incongruity of grace to its original mission environment where it accompanied the formation of new communities, or as a reconfiguration of the “new perspective,” placing its best historical and exegetical insights within the frame of Paul’s theology of grace.<sup>211</sup>

Indeed, Barclay neither agrees with the Reformers’ nor the NPP’s view. For example, regarding the works of the law, Moo argues that “Barclay is closer to the new perspective in insisting that it is ‘law’ and not ‘works’ that is the key word in Paul’s debated phrase; but he is closer to the old perspective in finding in the phrase a universal condemnation of human systems of worth.”<sup>212</sup> Barclay’s work offers grounds for cautious optimism that future scholarship may further develop a constructive reconciliation between the Reformers’ closely similar views and the NPP.

Richard B. Hays’ *The Faith of Jesus Christ*<sup>213</sup> can also contribute to a constructive scholarly conversation around Paul that can help mediate between some aspects of NPP and more traditional readings. Hays supports the subjective translation (“the faithfulness of Christ”) rather than the Reformers’ objective translation (“faith in Christ”) in the phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ, and his study cannot make a direct bridge between NPP and the Reformers’ view. However, his emphasis on the narrative substructure of Paul’s argument encourages scholars on both sides to attend to how Scripture, story, and theology interact. Chester

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<sup>211</sup> Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 573.

<sup>212</sup> Moo, “John Barclay’s Paul and the Gift and the New Perspective on Paul,” 287–88.

<sup>213</sup> Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*.

discerns grounds for optimism in Hays’s interpretive approach: “In making union with Christ central to Pauline soteriology, and in asserting its ecclesial and ethical implications, Hays is completely consistent with Reformation insights. The same is true of his desire to make union with Christ central to justification and his rejection of attempts to treat them as unrelated or to play one off against the other.”<sup>214</sup>

Another significant work is Douglas Campbell’s *The Deliverance of God*.<sup>215</sup> Campbell also offers a subjective translation (“faithfulness of Christ”) of πίστις Χριστοῦ, and his extensive research revisits several issues in Pauline theology. His proposal emphasizes God’s “righteousness” and justification as an essentially unconditional act of divine “deliverance,” avoiding the complications associated with penal substitutionary atonement or the “contractual” framing of human faith as the instrument through which God’s deliverance is obtained. Despite the presence of several problematic aspects in his treatment,<sup>216</sup> his insights may nonetheless contribute constructively to efforts aimed at reconciling NPP with the Reformed understanding.<sup>217</sup>

Finally, Michael Bird’s *The Saving Righteousness of God*<sup>218</sup> represents a constructive contribution that offers cautious optimism for future scholarship aimed at exploring possible avenues of reconciliation between the NPP and the Reformed tradition. For Bird, the NPP is largely correct in its positive claims—particularly its emphasis on

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<sup>214</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 381.

<sup>215</sup> Campbell, *The Deliverance of God*.

<sup>216</sup> Douglas J. Moo, “Review Article: *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* by Douglas A. Campbell,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53, no. 1 (2010): 150.

<sup>217</sup> Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 386–91.

<sup>218</sup> Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God*.

Jew–Gentile unity in Paul’s theology—but mistaken in its negative conclusions, especially where it restricts justification to a merely or predominantly social function. He also acknowledges that the NPP has made a valuable contribution by challenging and correcting nineteenth- and twentieth-century views of Second Temple Judaism. Bird understands justification as encompassing both a vertical dimension, concerned with an individual’s status before God, and a horizontal dimension, concerned with the inclusion of Gentiles within the people of God, thereby capturing Paul’s dual theological and ecclesiological concerns. To articulate this framework, Bird coins the term “ethnocentric nomism,” by which he seeks to account for Paul’s simultaneous critique of both legalistic reliance on the law and nationalist exclusivism. Accordingly, Bird argues that several Pauline texts address these twin distortions together, including Romans 9:30–10:4 and Philippians 3:3–9. Bird’s approach moves beyond false dichotomies—such as construing justification as either forensic or participationist, or righteousness as either relational or a bestowed gift—and thereby offers a promising framework for a Pauline theology that integratively incorporates insights from both NPP and the traditional Reformed tradition.

## Chapter 10

### Discussion and Recommendations

Over the past half-century, the NPP has emerged as one of the most influential and contested movements in Pauline scholarship. Although internally diverse, the NPP can be broadly described in terms of three major phases. First, the seminal work of E. P. Sanders fundamentally challenged the long-standing Reformation-era portrayal of Second Temple Judaism as a religion of legalistic works-righteousness, proposing the paradigm of covenantal nomism instead. Second, building on Sanders's historical reassessment, James D. G. Dunn reinterpreted Paul's critique of the works of the law as primarily directed against ethnic boundary markers that functioned as badges of covenant membership rather than against human moral effort as such. Third, N. T. Wright further developed and systematized these insights within a comprehensive historical and narrative framework, situating Paul's theology within the larger story of Israel's covenant, exile, and eschatological restoration.

The aim of this thesis was to revisit the main claims of the NPP, using the examination of the implications of Stephen J. Chester's critique for N. T. Wright's understanding of the gospel in Paul's New Testament writings as a springboard. By placing these two approaches in critical dialogue, this study has sought to clarify the theological and exegetical tensions between the NPP and the Reformed tradition, with particular attention to the understanding of God's righteousness, justification, the works of the law, and the nature of the gospel.

This thesis focused particularly on the understanding of the gospel, recognizing it as the central message of Scripture. Through detailed word studies, conceptual analyses, and related exegetical investigation, the findings of this work align with recent scholarship indicating that many of the claims advanced by NPP are fundamentally mistaken. Furthermore, this study emphasizes that the NPP's reinterpretation risks altering the biblical presentation of the gospel, a concern that carries significant implications for the Church.

On the other hand, it can also be concluded that the NPP has stimulated a more accurate and nuanced understanding of Second Temple Judaism, representing a significant scholarly contribution. Moreover, the NPP has encouraged a greater emphasis on contextually informed and precise exegesis in the study of Pauline theology.

The present investigation also suggests that common ground may be achievable in certain areas between the two camps. However, differences in conceptual frameworks and terminological usage between NPP and Reformed scholarship present challenges to such reconciliation. For example, the NPP seeks to articulate the relational dimension of salvation based on "covenant membership," a concept not employed within Reformed theology. By contrast, Reformed theology accounts for this relational dimension through distinct doctrinal categories, most notably the theological concept of adoption. At the same time, the doctrine of union with Christ is affirmed in both the NPP and Reformed theology.

In light of this, this study recommends the deliberate development of a shared theological vocabulary—one that employs concepts defined with sufficient clarity and consistency across both interpretive traditions—as a constructive step toward more fruitful and precise dialogue.

## Appendix A

### List of gospel words in the Gospels

This Appendix catalogs all occurrences of the gospel words in the canonical Gospels abstaining from detailed exegesis of individual verses. The purpose of this compilation is to focus on the application of gospel words.

There are five occurrences of the gospel words in Matthew, i.e., the noun εὐαγγέλιον occurs four times, and the verb εὐαγγελίζω occurs once.

#### Matthew 4:23

Καὶ περιῆγεν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ διδάσκων ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας καὶ θεραπεύων πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν ἐν τῷ λαῷ.	And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the <b>gospel</b> of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.
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This occurrence in Matthew can be found in the description of Jesus' Galilean ministry when he teaches and heals in Galilee. The word εὐαγγέλιον (noun, accusative, singular neuter) could also be regarded as a verbal noun ("proclamation" rather than "good news").<sup>219</sup> It is interesting to note that the gospel is the "gospel of the kingdom," which is proclaimed. Furthermore, the gospel is related to healing.

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<sup>219</sup> Charles L. Quarles, *Matthew*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2017), 48.

### Matthew 9:35

Καὶ περιῆγεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὰς πόλεις πάσας καὶ τὰς κώμας διδάσκων ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κηρύσσων τὸ <b>εὐαγγέλιον</b> τῆς βασιλείας καὶ θεραπεύων πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν.	Then Jesus went throughout all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the <b>good news</b> of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and sickness.
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This occurrence of the word εὐαγγέλιον (noun, accusative, singular neuter) was recorded in Matthew in the description of Jesus' extended ministry. Similarly, like in Matthew 4:23, the preaching of the gospel is referred to as the "gospel of the Kingdom,"<sup>220</sup> and it is also related to the healing ministry of Jesus.

### Matthew 11:5

τυφλοὶ ἀναβλέπουσιν καὶ χωλοὶ περιπατοῦσιν, λεπροὶ καθαρίζονται καὶ κωφοὶ ἀκούουσιν, καὶ νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται καὶ πτωχοὶ <b>εὐαγγελίζονται</b> .	The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have <b>good news</b> proclaimed to them.
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This occurrence is in the part where John the Baptist questions about the Messiah and Jesus answers his own miracles and preaching using the language of Isaiah 35:5–6; 61:1.<sup>221</sup> The preaching of the Good News in verse 5 has the word εὐαγγελίζονται (verb,

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<sup>220</sup> The two appearances (Matthew 4:23 and 9:35) shows the importance of this as a summary of Jesus' ministry in Matthew.

<sup>221</sup> D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelin (London: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1984), 8:262.

present, passive, indicative, third person, plural). It marks that the messianic vision that the Good News is preached to the poor is fulfilled.

#### **Matthew 24:14**

καὶ κηρυχθήσεται τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ εἰς μαρτύριον πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καὶ τότε ἔξει τὸ τέλος.	And this <b>gospel</b> of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole inhabited earth as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.
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This part is when Jesus is talking to his disciples about the signs of the end of the ages and about the persecution of his disciples. The word εὐαγγέλιον (noun, nominative, singular, neuter) is used in the context of the worldwide gospel proclamation. Note again that the gospel is referred to as the “gospel of the kingdom.”

#### **Matthew 26:13**

ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅπου ἐὰν κηρυχθῇ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦτο ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ, λαληθήσεται καὶ ὁ ἐποίησεν αὕτη εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς.	I tell you the truth, wherever this <b>gospel</b> is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”
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This occurrence is in the story of Jesus’ anointing by a woman in the house of Simon. We can observe in this verse that the word εὐαγγέλιον (noun, nominative, singular, neuter) with the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο is short for τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας occurred in Matthew 24:14,<sup>222</sup> so it means again the “gospel of the kingdom.”

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<sup>222</sup> Quarles, *Matthew*, 311.

It is also remarkable that we do not know exactly why Jesus refers to the gospel in this context. The most probable interpretation is that “the woman and her deed would be remembered ‘wherever’ the ‘gospel of the kingdom’ would be preached.”<sup>223</sup>

In summary, in Matthew, of the five occurrences of the gospel words, the verb εὐαγγελίζω occurs once and refers to the *act of preaching* (Matthew 11:5). In all four occurrences of the noun εὐαγγέλιον is also linked to the *preaching or proclamation of this message* (Matthew 4:23; 9:35, 24:14; 26:13). Moreover, this gospel is the “*gospel of the kingdom*,” which is explicitly stated in three cases (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 24:14). In addition, in three cases, the gospel preaching is also linked to the *healing ministry*<sup>224</sup> of Jesus (Matthew 4:23; 9:35, 11:5).

There are eight occurrences of the gospel words in Mark. In each case, it is the noun εὐαγγέλιον. I discuss all cases as follows.

**Mark 1:1**

<p>Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ].</p>	<p>The beginning of the <b>gospel</b> of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.</p>
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The word εὐαγγελίου (noun, genitive, singular, neuter) is used in the first verse of Mark, which can be considered as the title of the book. It seems that Mark created a new literary genre, i.e., the “gospel”, in order to convey the Good News.<sup>225</sup> There is a possibility

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<sup>223</sup> Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 8:527.

<sup>224</sup> The healings are illustrative of the teaching, demonstrative of kingdom reality, and testify to Jesus as the one who reigns in the kingdom.

<sup>225</sup> Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 8:618. That Mark may have founded the genre assumes Marcan priority.

to make the translation of Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as an objective or subjective genitive, and the translations differ regarding this choice (e.g., NIV translates it as an objective genitive: “about Jesus Christ,” but the subjective genitive “by Jesus Christ” is also possible).<sup>226</sup>

### Mark 1:14

Μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ	Now after John was imprisoned, Jesus went into Galilee and proclaimed the <b>gospel</b> of God.
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This verse occurs in the description of when Jesus started to preach in Galilee. In this verse, the word εὐαγγέλιον (noun, accusative, singular, neuter) is related to God, i.e., this is the “gospel of God.”

### Mark 1:15

καὶ λέγων ὅτι πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ· μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεῦετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.	and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the <b>gospel</b> .”
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The word εὐαγγελίῳ (noun, dative, singular, neuter) occurs in Mark when Jesus begins his ministry. It is important to note that the gospel is in the context of two imperatives: repent and believe. “If repentance denotes that which one turns *from*, belief denotes that which one turns *to* — the gospel.”<sup>227</sup>

### Mark 8:35

<sup>226</sup> Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 8:618.

<sup>227</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 47.

<p>ὃς γὰρ ἐὰν θέλῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν· ὃς δ' ἂν ἀπολέσει τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ καὶ τοῦ <b>εὐαγγελίου</b> σώσει αὐτήν.</p>	<p>For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and because of the <b>gospel</b> will save it.</p>
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This occurrence is in the part of Mark when Jesus teaches about following him. The word εὐαγγελίου (noun, genitive, singular, neuter) is included in the “because of the gospel” or “for the gospel” expression, which is “probably a reference to the preaching of the gospel for which men are to give their lives.”<sup>228</sup>

**Mark 10:29–30**

<p>ἔφη ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐδεὶς ἐστὶν ὃς ἀφῆκεν οἰκίαν ἢ ἀδελφοὺς ἢ ἀδελφὰς ἢ μητέρα ἢ πατέρα ἢ τέκνα ἢ ἀγροὺς ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ καὶ ἕνεκεν τοῦ <b>εὐαγγελίου</b>, ἐὰν μὴ λάβῃ ἑκατονταπλασίονα νῦν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ οἰκίας καὶ ἀδελφοὺς καὶ ἀδελφὰς καὶ μητέρας καὶ τέκνα καὶ ἀγροὺς μετὰ διωγμῶν, καὶ ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τῷ ἐρχομένῳ ζωὴν αἰώνιον. πολλοὶ δὲ ἔσονται πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι καὶ [οἱ] ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι.</p>	<p>Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, there is no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the <b>gospel</b> who will not receive in this age a hundred times as much—homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, fields, all with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.</p>
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<sup>228</sup> Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 8:697.

This occurrence is recorded in the part when Jesus talks with his disciples after meeting the rich man. It is interesting to note that the person of Jesus and the word εὐαγγελίου (noun, genitive, singular, neuter) are strongly linked in the expression: “for my sake and for the sake of the gospel.”

### Mark 13:10

καὶ εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη πρῶτον δεῖ κηρυχθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον.	And the <b>gospel</b> must first be proclaimed to all nations.
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The description of the signs of the end of the age contains this verse. The word εὐαγγέλιον (noun, accusative, singular, neuter) refers to the message, and most probably is a reference to the same word in Mark 1:1.

### Mark 14:9

ἀμὴν δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅπου ἐὰν κηρυχθῆ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον εἰς ὅλον τὸν κόσμον, καὶ ὃ ἐποίησεν αὕτη λαληθήσεται εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς.	And truly, I say to you, wherever the <b>gospel</b> is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”
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The verse is in the story when Jesus was anointed at Bethany by a woman. It is interesting that this event is mentioned as the gospel is preached. The word εὐαγγέλιον (noun, nominative, singular, neuter) is used in the context of proclamation. This is a worldwide proclamation implying a multi-ethnic, humanity-wide pronouncement of good news.

## Mark 16:15

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· πορευθέντες εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἅπαντα κηρύξατε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον πάσῃ τῇ κτίσει.	And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the <b>gospel</b> to the whole creation.
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This occurrence is in the Great Commission. The word εὐαγγέλιον (noun, accusative, singular, neuter) is used again together with the proclamation. I mention here the textual-critical problem of the ending of Mark (Mark 16:9–20), which signals that this verse was not in the two oldest Greek manuscripts (**Ⲙ** and **B**).<sup>229</sup>

In summary, from the eight occurrences of the noun εὐαγγέλιον in Mark, five are used together with the “proclamation,” referring to the *preaching of the gospel* (Mark 1:14; 1:15; 13:10; 14:9; 16:15), two are referring to *the message* (Mark 8:35; 10:29), and one is used as a title of the book like a new literary *genre* (Mark 1:1). It is also interesting that in three cases, the “whole world” (Mark 14:9), “all nations” (Mark 13:10), and “all creation” (Mark 16:15) are linked to the “gospel word,” emphasizing the *generality* of the gospel. Another important observation is that “Mark turns from the preaching about Christ to the preaching of Christ in order to orient the Church toward the image of the Son of God and Son of Man who was active in the past.”<sup>230</sup>

There are ten occurrences of the verb εὐαγγελίζω in Luke. I discuss all of them in this section.

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<sup>229</sup> Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 102.

<sup>230</sup> G. Strecker, “εὐαγγέλιον,” in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard M. Schneider, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 2:73.

### Luke 1:19

καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ ἄγγελος εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἐγώ εἰμι Γαβριήλ ὁ παρεστηκὸς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἀπεστάλην λαλῆσαι πρὸς σὲ καὶ <b>εὐαγγελίσασθαι</b> σοι ταῦτα·	And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this <b>good news</b> .”
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The word εὐαγγελίσασθαι (infinitive, aorist, middle, infinitive) is a purpose use of the infinitive and its occurrence is in the part when Gabriel is announcing the birth of John. The good news refers to all of Luke 1:13–17, including John’s role in preparing the way for Jesus.

### Luke 2:10

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ ἄγγελος· μὴ φοβεῖσθε, ἰδοὺ γὰρ <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι</b> ὑμῖν χαρὰν μεγάλην ἣτις ἔσται παντὶ τῷ λαῷ,	And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you <b>good news</b> of great joy that will be for all the people.”
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The word εὐαγγελίζομαι (verb, present, middle, indicative, first person, singular) is used in the story of the shepherds when the angels appeared to them. It is worth mentioning that the word εὐαγγελίζω is used ten times in Luke and once in Mark; it is not used in any of the other Gospels.

### Luke 3:18

Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἕτερα παρακαλῶν <b>εὐηγγελίζετο</b> τὸν λαόν.	So with many other exhortations he preached <b>good news</b> to the people.
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The word εὐηγγελίζετο (verb, imperfect, middle, indicative, third person, singular) is in the part when John the Baptist is preaching, and the “good news” here includes “the forgiveness and the purifying work of the Spirit that Jesus will bring.”<sup>231</sup>

#### Luke 4:18

<p>πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ’ ἐμὲ οὗ ἕνεκεν ἔχρισέν  <b>με εὐαγγελίσασθαι</b> πτωχοῖς, ἀπέσταλκέν          με, κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεςιν καὶ          τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν, ἀποστεῖλαι          τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει,</p>	<p>“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,          because he has anointed me to proclaim  <b>good news</b> to the poor. He has sent me to          proclaim liberty to the captives and          recovering of sight to the blind, to set at          liberty those who are oppressed,</p>
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Jesus quoted from Isaiah when this word occurs. More specifically, Jesus combined the passages of Isa 61:1; 58:6; and 61:2a.<sup>232</sup> The word εὐαγγελίσασθαι (verb, aorist, middle, infinitive). This infinitive could modify either ἔχρισέν (“anointed me to preach”) or ἀπέσταλκέν (“sent me to preach”).<sup>233</sup> Note that the addressee of Jesus’ preaching of the good news is the poor.

#### Luke 4:43

<p>ὁ δὲ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ὅτι καὶ ταῖς ἑτέραις          πόλεσιν <b>εὐαγγελίσασθαί</b> με δεῖ τὴν</p>	<p>but he said to them, “I must preach the  <b>good news</b> of the kingdom of God to the</p>
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<sup>231</sup> Alan J. Thompson, *Luke*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 64.

<sup>232</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 197.

<sup>233</sup> Thompson, *Luke*, 73–74.

<p>βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅτι ἐπὶ τοῦτο ἀπεστάλην.</p>	<p>other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.”</p>
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The word εὐαγγελίσασθαι (verb, aorist, middle, infinitive) is used in this verse when Jesus was preaching in the synagogues of Judea. It refers to the preaching ministry of the good news. It seems that Luke emphasizes again the *preaching* of the good news rather than the *goodness* of the good news.<sup>234</sup> Moreover, this good news is the “good news of the kingdom of God.”

### Luke 7:22

<p>καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· πορευθέντες ἀπαγγείλατε Ἰωάννῃ ἃ εἶδετε καὶ ἤκούσατε· τυφλοὶ ἀναβλέπουσιν, χωλοὶ περιπατοῦσιν, λεπροὶ καθαρίζονται καὶ κωφοὶ ἀκούουσιν, νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται, πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται·</p>	<p>And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have <b>good news</b> preached to them.</p>
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Jesus’ reply to John’s question in this verse echoes Isaiah 29 and 35. The word εὐαγγελίζονται (verb, present, passive, indicative, third person, plural) is used with the preaching, more specifically, “preaching to the poor,” which is “the capstone of his messianic activity because it seems anticlimactic after the more pyrotechnic miracle of raising the dead.”<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 218.

<sup>235</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 312.

### Luke 8:1

Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ καθεξῆς καὶ αὐτὸς διώδευεν κατὰ πόλιν καὶ κώμην κηρύσσων καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οἱ δώδεκα σὺν αὐτῷ,	Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the <b>good news</b> of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him,
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The word εὐαγγελιζόμενος (present, middle, participle, singular, nominative, masculine) occurs in the part when Jesus was traveling with the twelve disciples through cities. The participle is adverbial, expressing manner. The good news is again the “good news of the kingdom of God.” The word εὐαγγελιζόμενος takes “kingdom” as its accusative direct object. The English is more idiomatic, employing the word “of”.

### Luke 9:6

ἐξερχόμενοι δὲ διήρχοντο κατὰ τὰς κώμας εὐαγγελιζόμενοι καὶ θεραπεύοντες πανταχοῦ.	And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the <b>gospel</b> and healing everywhere.
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The word εὐαγγελιζόμενοι (present, middle, participle, plural, nominative, masculine) occurs in the part when Jesus sent out his disciples. The adverbial participle expresses manner and is linked to healing.

### Luke 16:16

Ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται μέχρι Ἰωάννου· ἀπὸ τότε ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ <b>εὐαγγελίζεται</b> καὶ πᾶς εἰς αὐτὴν βιάζεται.	“The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the <b>good news</b> of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it.
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The word εὐαγγελίζεται (verb, present, passive, indicative, third person, singular) refers to the preaching of the good news of the kingdom of God. It is a mark of a new era because the previous one (the Law and the Prophets) was completed. The “kingdom” is not actually in genitive relationship with good news (“of the kingdom”) here. Instead, it is the subject of the passive verb.

### Luke 20:1

Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν μιᾷ τῶν ἡμερῶν διδάσκοντος αὐτοῦ τὸν λαὸν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ καὶ <b>εὐαγγελιζομένου</b> ἐπέστησαν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς σὺν τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις	One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the <b>gospel</b> , the chief priests and the scribes, with the elders came up
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This occurrence is in the part when Jesus was asked by what authority he was doing his ministry. The word εὐαγγελιζομένου (present, middle, participle, singular, genitive, masculine) with the genitive subjective αὐτοῦ is a genitive absolute temporal construction. It is important to note that the “preaching the gospel” (εὐαγγελιζομένου) is distinguished from the “teaching” (διδάσκοντος), and it cannot be found in other Synoptics.

In summary, Luke uses only the verb εὐαγγελίζω of the gospel words, but he uses it intensively, ten times in his Gospel. The message of the preaching, the gospel, has a different emphasis depending on the context in which it is used. Two times<sup>236</sup> the *birth of Jesus* is emphasized as the gospel (Luke 1:19; 2:10). Two times the *poor*, as the addressee of the preaching is highlighted (Luke 4:18; 7:22). Three times the “*kingdom of God*” is emphasized as the content of the preached gospel (Luke 4:43; 8:1; 16:16). One the gospel preaching is linked to the *healing* ministry of Jesus’ disciples (Luke 9:6). Two times the preaching of the gospel have no particular emphasis (Luke 3:18; 20:1), including (most probably) all elements of the message Jesus preached at different occasions.

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<sup>236</sup> More precisely, Luke 1:19 refers to the birth of John, which connects to the birth of Jesus.

## Appendix B

### List of gospel words in the letters of the Pillars

This appendix presents a systematic catalog of all occurrences of the principal “gospel” terms in the epistles of the Pillar Apostles. Notably, only four such occurrences appear in the First Epistle of Peter. Without a detailed exegesis, this compilation focuses on the application of the gospel words.

#### 1 Peter 1:12

οἷς ἀπεκαλύφθη ὅτι οὐχ ἑαυτοῖς, ὑμῖν δὲ διηκόνουν αὐτὰ ἃ νῦν ἀνηγγέλη ὑμῖν διὰ τῶν εὐαγγελισαμένων ὑμᾶς ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ ἀποσταλέντι ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ, εἰς ἃ ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ἄγγελοι παρακύψαι.	It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who <b>preached the good news</b> to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.
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The word εὐαγγελισαμένων (aorist, middle, participle, plural, genitive, masculine) is from the verb εὐαγγελίζω (preach the gospel). This verse is an interesting claim about the gospel. Peter compares what the prophets prophesied in the past to the new revelations in the gospel preached by the apostles. This gospel is the good news, the “things into which angels long to look.”

### 1 Peter 1:25

τὸ δὲ ῥῆμα κυρίου μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν τὸ ῥῆμα τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν εἰς ὑμᾶς.	but the word of the Lord remains forever. And this word is the <b>good news that was preached</b> to you.
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The form εὐαγγελισθὲν (aorist, passive, participle, singular, nominative, neuter) is from the verb εὐαγγελίζω (preach the gospel). First Peter 1:24–25 is from the LXX (the text is closer to the LXX than the MT)<sup>237</sup> of Isaiah 40:6–8. These verses (and their broader but near-context in Isaiah 40:3–9) make it clear that the “word of God” understood by Isaiah and the “gospel” is the same in nature. The “word of God” is at work at the proclamation of the “gospel,” by which “you have been born again” (1 Peter 1:23).

### 1 Peter 4:6

εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ νεκροῖς εὐηγγελίσθη, ἵνα κριθῶσιν μὲν κατὰ ἄνθρωπους σαρκί, ζῶσιν δὲ κατὰ θεὸν πνεύματι.	For this is why <b>the gospel was preached</b> even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.
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The word εὐηγγελίσθη (aorist, passive, indicative, third person singular) is from the verb εὐαγγελίζω (preach the gospel). It is a difficult verse, interpreted in many ways by commentators. Εὐηγγελίσθη has no personal subject, but the impersonal use of the verb is

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<sup>237</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 141.

very rare in the New Testament.<sup>238</sup> The implied subject being Christ (“Christ was preached”) is the most likely since Christ as the active object is used many times elsewhere with the verb (e.g., Acts 8:35; 11:20; 17:18; Galatians 1:16). Regardless of the complete interpretation of this challenging verse we can conclude that “the good news was preached” referring to gospel preaching, i.e., “Christ was preached.”

### 1 Peter 4:17

<p>ὅτι ὁ καιρὸς τοῦ ἄρξασθαι τὸ κρίμα ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ δὲ πρῶτον ἀφ’ ἡμῶν, τί τὸ τέλος τῶν ἀπειθούντων τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίῳ;</p>	<p>For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the <b>gospel</b> of God?</p>
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The word εὐαγγελίῳ (dative, singular, neuter) is from the noun εὐαγγέλιον (gospel). Peter is referring to the eschatological judgment. The verse puts people into two categories: those in the “household of God,” who believed the gospel, and those who “do not obey the gospel of God.” Since obeying (receiving) this “gospel” places someone within the “household of God” (Christians), it is the salvific gospel.

In summary, we can conclude that all four gospel word occurrences refer to the “good news” proclaimed by the apostles; it has power and saves sinners. It is the salvific gospel and/or the preaching of that gospel in line with how it is used in the other parts of the New Testament. Peter used the content of the gospel and its preaching in his first letter in the same way as other authors in the New Testament.

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<sup>238</sup> Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 287.

## Appendix C

### List of gospel concepts in the Petrine epistles

The first letter of Peter is rich in soteriology, which inherently relates to the gospel concepts. First, I consider some soteriological dependencies.

The “**born again**” – 1 Peter 1:3, 23 (ἀναγεννάω) and John 3:3, 7 (γεννάω) relationship:

<p><b>1 Peter 1:3</b></p> <p>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us <b>to be born again</b> to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,</p> <p><b>1 Peter 1:23</b></p> <p>since <b>you have been born again</b>, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;</p>	<p><b>John 3:3</b></p> <p>Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless <b>one is born again</b> he cannot see the kingdom of God.”</p> <p><b>John 3:7</b></p> <p>Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘<b>You must be born again.</b>’</p>
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A **verbal agreement** can be established since Peter uses the expression two times “to be born again” (ἀναγεννάω) in a regeneration language, which is also used by Jesus two times in John (γεννάω) in a similar way. We can find **propositional agreement** beyond verbal agreements since the action of “to be born again” identifies the same thing in all cases: the active agent is God, the person is passive, and the result is to live a new life with

eschatological hope. In addition, Peter attaches the “born again” concept to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, showing relationships with more gospel concepts, i.e., “Jesus’ death for sins,” its soteriological relationships (“born again”), and “Jesus’ resurrection.” The multiple related concepts also support **conceptual analogies**. Regarding **accessibility**, we can strongly assume that Peter knew the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus. In summary, in this case, the relationships can be identified at all levels (verbal, propositional, and conceptual agreements), which is also supported by the high probability of accessibility.

The “**blood of Christ**” – 1 Peter 1:2, 19 (αἷμα) and 1 Corinthians 10:16, Ephesians 2:13 (αἷμα) relationships:

<p><b>1 Peter 1:2</b></p> <p>according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to <b>Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood</b>: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.</p> <p><b>1 Peter 1:19</b></p> <p>but with the precious <b>blood of Christ</b>, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.</p>	<p><b>1 Corinthians 10:16</b></p> <p>The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the <b>blood of Christ</b>?</p> <p>The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?</p> <p><b>Ephesians 2:13</b></p> <p>But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the <b>blood of Christ</b>.</p>
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The “blood of Christ” is central to the gospel message, symbolizing Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross, which is a direct relationship with the gospel concept of

“Jesus’ death for sins.” As most commentators recognize,<sup>239</sup> 1 Peter 1:2 mentioned it in a way as an allusion to the covenant ceremony in Exodus 24, where animal blood was sprinkled on the people establishing the covenant. Peter uses it to refer to the new covenant by the blood of Jesus Christ. Both parallel passages in 1 Corinthians 10:16 and Ephesians 2:13 show **verbal, propositional, and conceptual agreements** as they point to the new covenant through the Lord’s supper (1 Corinthians 10:16) and “unity language” in Ephesians 2:13. Regarding accessibility, we have no specific information about it.

The 1 Peter 1:5 “**being guarded through faith for a salvation**” – Ephesians 2:8 “**you have been saved through faith**” relationship:

<p><b>1 Peter 1:5</b> who by God’s power are <b>being guarded through faith for a salvation</b> ready to be revealed in the last time.</p>	<p><b>Ephesians 2:8</b> For by grace <b>you have been saved through faith</b>. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,</p>
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Both 1 Peter 1:5 and Ephesians 2:8 express the importance and the role of “faith” as an instrument in salvation. Despite some suggesting that πίστewος refers to God’s righteousness, the near context (1 Peter 1:7; 8; 9) makes it clear that the faith of the believer is referred to.<sup>240</sup> This faith, which is an important component of the gospel message and directly related to the gospel concept of “Jesus’ death for sins,” is well paralleled with

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<sup>239</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 76.

<sup>240</sup> Mark Dubis, *1 Peter: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 8.

Ephesians 2:8, showing **propositional and conceptual agreements**. We have no information about accessibility.

The **1 Peter 2:22–24 – 2 Corinthians 5:21** relationships:

**“He committed no sin” – “who knew no sin”**

**“He himself bore our sins” – “he made him to be sin”**

**“live to righteousness” – “become the righteousness of God”**

<p><b>1 Peter 2:22–24</b> He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. <b>He himself bore our sins</b> in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and <b>live to righteousness</b>. By his wounds you have been healed.</p>	<p><b>2 Corinthians 5:21</b> For our sake <b>he made him to be sin who knew no sin</b>, so that in him we might <b>become the righteousness of God</b>.</p>
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Both 1 Peter 2:22–24 (rooted in Isaiah 53:9) and 2 Corinthians 5:2 contain important concepts related to the gospel message and the gospel concepts: (1) the sinlessness of Jesus Christ, (2) the concept of penal substitution, and (3) the imputation of God’s righteousness. Despite the different aspects of righteousness mentioned by Peter (the conduct of right living) and by Paul (declared righteousness), they are strongly related since

the former is the result of the latter. Even if we have no exact verbal agreement, the strong **propositional and conceptual agreements** cannot be denied. We have no data about the accessibility relationships.

1 Peter 3:18 **“Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous”** – **“who was delivered up for our trespasses,”** and Romans 4:25 **“he might bring us to God”** – **“we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”** relationships:

<p><b>1 Peter 3:18</b></p> <p>For <b>Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God</b>, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,</p>	<p><b>Romans 4:25</b></p> <p><b>who was delivered up for our trespasses</b> and raised for our justification. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, <b>we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.</b></p>
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First Peter 3:18 and Romans 4:25 show a strong connection to the concept of penal substitution. Even the result of Christ’s salvation is declared in both verses, i.e., bringing us to God. The relationships with more gospel concepts (“Jesus’ death for sins,” “Jesus’ messiahship” and “Jesus’ fulfillment of the Scriptures”) are undeniable. We can identify the **propositional and conceptual agreements**. We cannot say much about possible accessibility.

Second Peter 1:1 “**a faith of equal standing with ours,**” – Romans 1:12, “**each other’s faith, both yours and mine,**” and Titus 1:4, “**common faith**” relationships.

<p><b>2 Peter 1:1</b> Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained <b>a faith of equal standing with ours</b> by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:</p>	<p><b>Romans 1:12</b> that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by <b>each other’s faith, both yours and mine.</b></p> <p><b>Titus 1:4</b> To Titus, my true child in a <b>common faith:</b> Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.</p>
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Second Peter 1:1 refers to the same “common faith,” which is also referred to in Romans 1:12 and Titus 1:4. Peter mentions that this “faith” is something given to believers, i.e., “obtained faith,” which is in line with the concept that the faith is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). The faith in 2 Peter 1:1 points to the gospel (and to the gospel concepts) because its use: the “faith” as a shorthand for the good news.<sup>241</sup> The “righteousness of God” is also the same that is discussed in Romans 3:21–26. The **propositional and conceptual agreements** in multiple connections are proved. Accessibility is unknown.

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<sup>241</sup> Peter H. Davids, *2 Peter and Jude: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 41–42.

## Appendix D

### List of gospel concepts in the Johannine epistles

In this Appendix I present parallels between the Johannine epistles and the rest of the New Testament regarding gospel concepts.

1 John 2:2 “**propitiation**” and Romans 3:25 “**propitiation**” relationships:

<b>1 John 2:2</b> He is the <b>propitiation</b> for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.	<b>Romans 3:25</b> whom God put forward as a <b>propitiation</b> by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.
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The precise translation of ἱλασμός in 1 John 2:2 into English is difficult<sup>242</sup> (e.g., ESV, NASB: propitiation, RSV: expiation, NIV, NET, NRSV: atoning sacrifice). Similarly, the different translations of the ἱλαστήριον in Romans 3:25 are also non-trivial (e.g., ESV, NASB: propitiation, RSV: expiation, NET: mercy seat, NIV: sacrifice of atonement). However, both the meaning of 1 John 2:2<sup>243</sup> and Romans 3:25<sup>244</sup> include the

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<sup>242</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *1–3 John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 77.

<sup>243</sup> Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 78.

<sup>244</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 235.

concept of “turning away of God’s wrath,” which is an important gospel concept (related to the “Jesus’ death for sins” kerygma component), supporting both **verbal, propositional, and conceptual agreements**. We have no proof to establish accessibility.

1 John 4:2, 2 John 7 “**coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh**” - Colossians 1:22 “**his body of flesh**” relationships:

<p><b>1 John 4:2</b> By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that <b>Jesus Christ has come in the flesh</b> is from God,</p> <p><b>2 John 7</b> For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the <b>coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh</b>. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.</p>	<p><b>Colossians 1:22</b> he has now reconciled in <b>his body of flesh</b> by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,</p>
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The concept that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is an important part of the gospel message (related to the “Jesus’ death for sins” kerygma component). 1 John 4:2 and 2 John 7 can be considered as a “rebuttal of the docetism”<sup>245</sup> that appeared in the early church, and these verses emphasize this aspect. The σάρξ in Colossians 1:22 also “refers simply to the “human mortality,” to the physical nature of life here on earth”<sup>246</sup> We can establish the **propositional and conceptual agreements**. No information is about accessibility.

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<sup>245</sup> Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 223.

<sup>246</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 142.

1 John 4:9 – John 3:16 relationships:

“love of God was made manifest among us” – “God so loved the world”

“God sent his only Son into the world” – “he gave his only Son”

“we might live through him” – “whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life”

<b>1 John 4:9</b> In this the <b>love of God</b> was <b>made manifest among us</b> , that <b>God sent his only Son into the world</b> , so that we <b>might live through him</b> .	<b>John 3:16</b> For <b>God so loved the world</b> , that <b>he gave his only Son</b> , that <b>whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life</b> .
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Both 1 John 4:9 and John 3:16 present a threefold truth about the gospel: (1) God’s active love is the controlling subject, (2) God’s action by sending his son, and (3) the life-giving goal. These are all strongly related to the “Jesus’ death for sins” kerygma component. We can identify **verbal agreements** (ἀγάπη - ἠγάπησεν, ζήσωμεν - ζωὴν), **propositional agreement** (initiated by God’s love, God sends his son to give life to believers) and **conceptual agreement** (Jesus’ intermediary role, which also echoing Genesis 22:2). Even if we do not accept the traditional view<sup>247</sup> that the apostle John wrote both 1 John and the gospel of John the strong relations between the two texts is undeniable. However, we have no information about accessibility if one denies that the author is the same in both cases.

3 John 1, 8 “**truth**” and Ephesians 1:13; 2 Timothy 2:15 “**the word of truth**” relationships:

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<sup>247</sup> Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 5–15.

<p><b>3 John 1</b> The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in <b>truth</b>.</p> <p><b>3 John 8</b> Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the <b>truth</b>.</p>	<p><b>Ephesians 1:13</b> In him you also, when you heard <b>the word of truth</b>, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,</p> <p><b>2 Timothy 2:15</b> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling <b>the word of truth</b>.</p>
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The Johannine epistles have many references to some form of “truth,” i.e., “truth” (ἀλήθεια), “true” (ἀληθής), and “true” (ἀληθινός) mentioned 21 times, which fit into different definition categories.<sup>248</sup> Both 3 John 1 and 3 John 8 well fit into the category of “truth refers to the gospel of Jesus Christ, its implications, and the sphere of eternal life into which the gospel ushers those who embrace it.”<sup>249</sup> These verses, therefore, are strongly related to the gospel concepts. As a parallel from the Pauline letters, I show two examples where “the word of truth” (λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας) means the gospel. The first is in Ephesians 1:13, where it is explained as “the gospel of your salvation.” The other example is in 2 Timothy 2:15, also referring to the gospel.<sup>250</sup> The **propositional and conceptual agreements** can be established. There is no data to see any accessibility.

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<sup>248</sup> Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 335–36.

<sup>249</sup> Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 336.

<sup>250</sup> Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1972), 111.

## Appendix E

### List of gospel concepts in James

This Appendix presents the list of gospel concepts in James.

James 2:1 “**the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory,**” Acts 20:21 “**faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,**” and 1 Corinthians 2:8 “**the Lord of glory**” relationships:

<b>James 2:1</b> My brothers, show no partiality as you hold <b>the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.</b>	<b>Acts 20:21</b> testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of <b>faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.</b> <b>1 Corinthians 2:8</b> None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified <b>the Lord of glory.</b>
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James 2:1 is presented by “notoriously difficult”<sup>251</sup> genitives in Greek, which makes the English translation hard. However, in any case, McKnight shows that ἔχετε τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ cannot be interpreted with the rising popular translation as the “faith of Jesus Christ,” but it is the “faith in Jesus Christ.”<sup>252</sup> The related gospel concept “Jesus’ death for sins” is present in this verse and other parallel verses like

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<sup>251</sup> Wall, *Community of the Wise*, 296.

<sup>252</sup> Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 176–77.

in Acts 20:21. Attaching the “Lord of glory” to the expression is unusual, and McKnight prefers the “faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious one” translation.<sup>253</sup> The phrase probably echoes Deuteronomy 10:17–18 and Sirach 35:10–15, and we can also read it in 1 Corinthians 2:8. We can identify **verbal, propositional, and conceptual agreements**. We have no information about accessibility.

James 5:7–9 “**coming of the Lord**” and 1 Thessalonians 4:15 “**coming of the Lord**” relationship:

<p><b>James 5:7–9</b> Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the <b>coming of the Lord</b>. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the <b>coming of the Lord</b> is at hand.</p>	<p><b>1 Thessalonians 4:15</b> For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the <b>coming of the Lord</b>, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.</p>
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James’ concept of “coming of the Lord” is paralleled by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, but the concept is also found in other letters of Paul (1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1). This theme is also reflected as the “coming of the Son of Man” in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). The concept is part of the Christian eschatological judgment, and related to the gospel concepts since this can be associated with all the four kerygma components. As a result of this analysis,

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<sup>253</sup> McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 178.

we can find **verbal, propositional, and conceptual agreements**. We can say nothing about accessibility.

## Appendix F

### List of gospel concepts in Jude

In this Appendix gospel concepts in Jude are presented.

Jude 3 “**common salvation**,” Jude 20 “**your most holy faith**,” Titus 1:4

“**common faith**,” and 2 Peter 1:1 “**a faith of equal standing with ours**” relationships:

<p><b>Jude 3</b> Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our <b>common salvation</b>, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.</p> <p><b>Jude 20</b> But you, beloved, building yourselves up in <b>your most holy faith</b> and praying in the Holy Spirit,</p>	<p><b>Titus 1:4</b> To Titus, my true child in a <b>common faith</b>: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.</p> <p><b>2 Peter 1:1</b> Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained <b>a faith of equal standing with ours</b> by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:</p>
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The concept of “common salvation/faith” (Jude 3, 20) is mentioned in two different verses, even in the extremely short Jude. The main message of the letter is an exhortation to contend for the faith (Jude 3), where the “metaphor is drawn from competitions in the games.”<sup>254</sup> The “faith” obviously is at the center of this letter. The “common salvation/faith” is an important characteristic of Christianity, together with a common God

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<sup>254</sup> Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 56.

(1 Corinthians 8:6), a common Savior (1 Corinthians 8:6), and a common body of believers (John 10:16). The way of salvation is also common as similarly described elsewhere in the New Testament like in Titus 1:4 and 2 Peter 1:1 and an important gospel concept. The **propositional and conceptual agreements** can be identified. No information is about accessibility.

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